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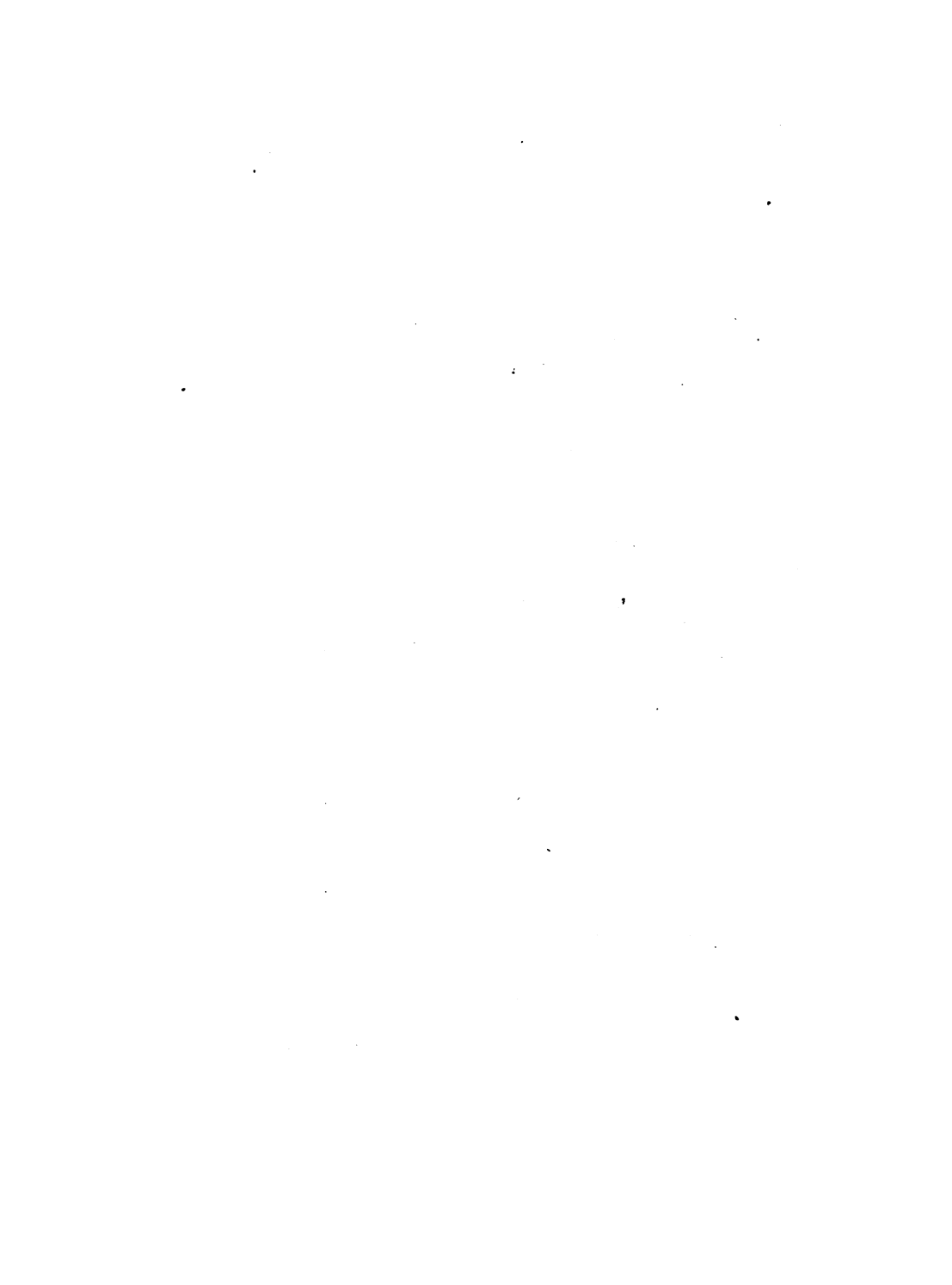


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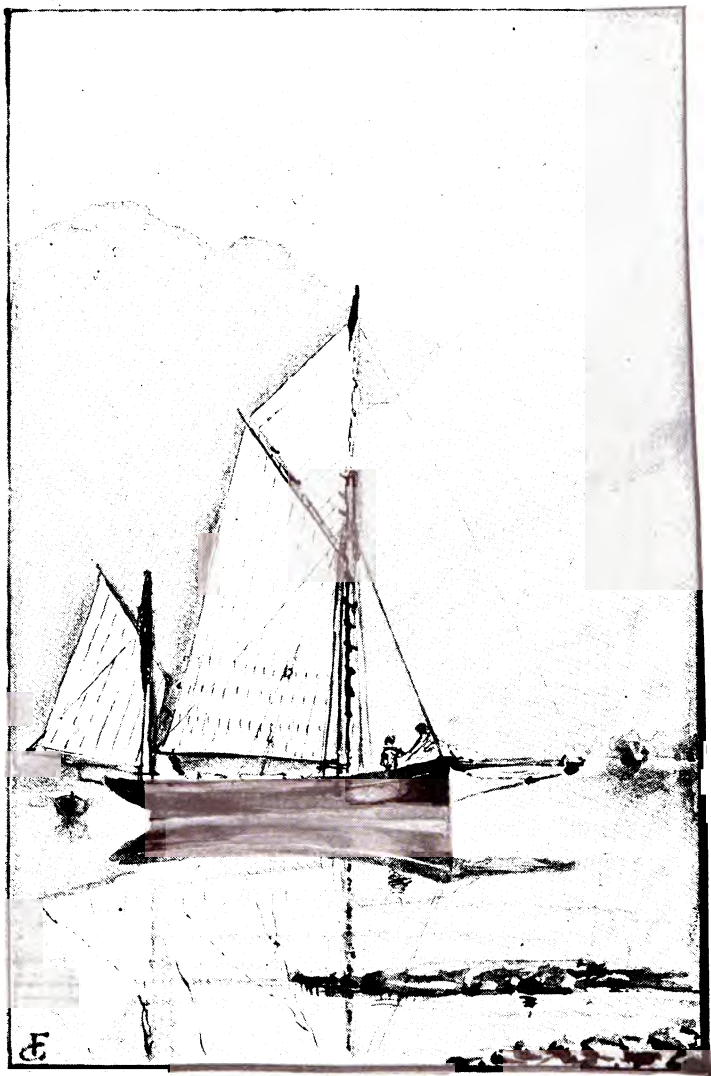
Couper, F.



JACK-ALL-ALONE.

NCW
COW BOY





"LADY HARVEY" IN LOCH GOIL.

JACK-ALL-ALONE: HIS CRUISES.

BY
FRANK COWPER,^R M.A.,

AUTHOR OF

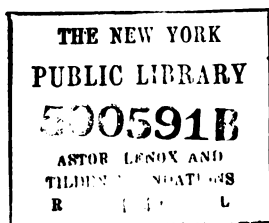
"Sailing Tours;" "The Captain of the Wight;"
"Xmas Eve on a Haunted Hulk;"
etc., etc., etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY W. A. WICKHAM & THE AUTHOR.

"ILLI ROBUR ET ÆS TRIPLEX
CIRCA PECTUS ERAT, QUI FRAGILEM TRUCI
COMMISIT PELAGO RATEM PRIMUS."

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TO
ALL LOVERS OF THE SEA,
AND ESPECIALLY
TO THOSE
KINDRED SPIRITS WHO REJOICE
TO FOLLOW THE TRADITIONS
OF THEIR RACE,
WHILE ROAMING ROUND THE COASTS
RENDERED CLASSIC
BY THE DEEDS OF
AN ADVENTUROUS ANCESTRY,
THESE PAGES
ARE SYMPATHETICALLY
DEDICATED.

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Jack-all-alone explains:

A FEW years ago there might often be seen in the streets of East Cowes a tall, spare figure, with erect bearing, clean shaven face, except for the regulation whisker of the period, firm mouth, and hearty expression.

This was a certain "Captain" Carter, formerly, I believe, in the Royal Navy, subsequently employed as Excise officer on the Irish coast, and latterly a yacht-agent.

It happened one day, soon after I had returned from a single-handed cruise over to Havre, that I was hailed

by this worthy type of the days when naval officers were more accustomed to working under canvas than they are now.

"Do you know what you're nicknamed about here?" asked the old gentleman. (He was over seventy, I believe.)

"No," I replied, not very anxious to hear. For experience had taught me that the comments of the professional class are not exactly complimentary to the amateur sailor.

"Why, they call you 'Jack-all-Alone,' and a very suitable nickname, too, I call it," said "Captain" Carter.

Since that time I have often thought the sobriquet was rather appropriate. At all events, it seemed to me original, and as such I have adopted it for the title of these reminiscences of many enjoyable hours and cruises, mostly solitary—cruises which were none the less delightful on that account. I may add that there is nothing in these pages that is not true, and nothing, I think, that is even exaggerated, as regards the actual sailing adventures. In respect of other episodes imagination may have played its part, but, after all, which is nearer reality—fiction or fact? The former is often Truth in a parable, the latter actuality suppressed.

JACK-ALL-ALONE.

Cruise I.

*"Vidi ego naufragium qui riserat æquore mergi
Et dixi nunquam justior unda fuit."*

FROM my earliest infancy I was devoted to the water—except when washing time came. With the true instinct of a sailor, I always objected to an external application of any liquid.

My earliest essays in the art of navigation were conducted by means of a soap dish, and the first seeds of scepticism were sown when I found that my Noah's Ark would not sail on a level keel, also that the paint came off, thereby evoking sundry slaps from my nurse and howls from myself.

I have often wondered since, what ballast Noah used or how he escaped shipwreck during that awful time when all the world was water. There must have been some very big seas then, and no mistake. But the man who wonders is not far off doubt, and to be in doubt is to be in a parlous state.

My next adventure resulted in a surprising discovery—no less an one than that iron would float. After this I thought less of the prophet Elisha and the miracle of the axe's head.

As this episode marks a distinct period in my life, and is, besides, an excellent illustration of how the greatest discoveries have resulted from the merest accident, I will make no apology for narrating it.

It was a lovely summer afternoon. There was to be a garden party, I well remember, for I had on my best clothes ; and that meant in the year of grace 18— a good deal, especially if the fortunate boy owned a mamma who took a considerable pride in the outward presentment of her offspring, and paid more regard to external effect than the practical comfort of the object of her solicitude.

Clad, then, in all the glory of the period, super-adorned by the exuberant fancy of a fond and imaginative parent, I wandered across the lawn and into the field which was usually the goal of my undirected steps.

Here my pony was turned out. Here I used to imitate, as far as I dared, the feats of the itinerant circus which periodically relieved the monotony of our country life, while I rode or stood on the pony's back as I urged the patient beast to a wild career after the manner of those daring equestrians whom I had gazed at with open-mouthed admiration. Secretly, too, how I longed that I might be chasing some such fairy form divine as I had seen eventually succumb to the furious ardour of the pursuing adorer ! What would I reck of fiery hoops or untamed coursers of the Volhynian Steppes so I might clasp at last that lissom figure, whose dainty draperies scarcely hid the panting beauty : and so I used to gallop, imitating the inane shout of the bold cavalier, until I missed my footing or leant over too far in my endeavour to pick up the ideal fair one's handkerchief, and came an abrupt cropper on the turf below.

Here, too, in a corner of the field was a most treasured spot. A duck pond lay stagnant and slimy under a quickset hedge, and surrounded on three sides by steep, overhanging banks. The fourth side was all a quagmire by reason of the cattle which came down to drink.

That afternoon I dared not mount the pony: it would have been a too conspicuous violation of the strict injunction not to get into mischief, too obvious an act of disobedience, so I wandered across to the duck pond.

It was very warm. The heated air quivered over the burnt-up grass. A lark trilled aloft in the clear atmosphere overhead, and in the oozy mud the ducks waddled or prodded with their bills.

There was no wind to sail my boat even if I could have escaped detection in bringing it down.

I stood and contemplated the ducks. How jolly they looked as they glided off in the water! I wished I were a duck. Presently my eyes fell on a large iron trough. It was quite a capacious, deep sort of tank, and it stood just on the edge of the water. I had never seen it there so close before. Evidently John meant to fill it and wheel it away to the next meadow, where there was no pond.

How very handy that tank was placed! Of course, it would not float; I was not such a fool as to think that. Of course, if iron could float where would have been the miracle performed by Elisha? But if it would not float at least I could push it into the water and stand inside. It would be a kind of submerged island. I should be as near imitating a duck as possible without being actually afloat.

No sooner had the idea occurred to me than I prepared to put it into execution. I had already entirely forgotten

the injunction to keep my white trousers clean, and the cuffs of my shirt spotless.

After considerable struggles, I at last launched the iron trough; at least I got it into the water. Then I stood in it. The sense of satisfaction at this feat accomplished did not last long. After all, I was only a foot away from the land; only in about an inch of water. As the vessel was fully a foot and a half high, it would go much further than that.

I got out and contemplated my island. Then I fetched a stout stick and pushed. To my joy the tank began to move, at first with much difficulty, then a little easier; when suddenly it went away quite unexpectedly, and I all but fell headlong into the water, only fortunately my stick saved me. However, I did not escape without getting one leg well in with a splash, and with disastrous consequences to my nether garments.

But the concern which no doubt I should have felt at this untoward event, was entirely obliterated by the astounding discovery that the iron tank was actually afloat! I could hardly believe my eyesight, yet there it was slowly revolving among the equally astonished ducks. There was no doubt about it, and, what was more, it seemed to float quite easily and with a singular resemblance to an ancient British coracle such as I had seen delineated in a favourite picture-book.

Then another uncontrollable desire seized me—I must get into that boat. The reality was beyond all my previous anticipations, although I had often longed to make a raft.

But how was I to get in? Or how could I reach the tank? It was now nearly in the centre of the pond. My stick would not reach it.

I did not remain long in doubt, however. At top speed I rushed back to the house, taking good care to go in by the back way, and in a very short time I was back at the pond again, hurling a stone tied to the end of a long piece of string at the now motionless tank, which had fortunately come rather nearer to one of the banks.

After many misses and losing many stones, much to the dismay of the disconcerted ducks, who were quacking distractedly on the further shore, I at last succeeded in putting the stone into my ship. Then I cautiously pulled on the string. As there was neither wind nor current, the vessel soon yielded to my efforts. Slowly it came to the bank, which was fairly steep-to, where I stood, and whence by the aid of an overhanging bough I was able very cautiously to get in. At first, I was doubtful if the iron tank would hold me, but when I found it really would, and that I was actually afloat, my joy knew no bounds.

With much prudence I tied the end of the string to the bough of the tree on the bank, and then with my stick I boldly pushed off into the centre of the pond. I found, however, the matter was one requiring great delicacy and judgment. The least movement out of the centre brought the side very low down, and I had already shipped some of the slimy pond, when the string caught round my leg, giving a violent jerk, and before I could recover myself I found I was struggling in the water, while the iron tank had disappeared.

Then I realised the difference between iron and wooden vessels, and that perhaps after all Elisha had produced a rather uncommon phenomenon. Indeed, I should have been very grateful for the prophet's aid at that moment. Fortunately the pond was not deep, only it was decidedly muddy

—so muddy that my white ducks never recovered, and I failed entirely in trying to conceal the catastrophe from the powers which were. So ended my first single-handed voyage. But it was not the only boat that I have ever sunk, by any means ; nor was it the end of my own struggles in the water.

Cruise II.

The Passage Perilous.

“ **H**I! Look a-head, sir! Lo—o—ok a-head, I say! Don't you hear? C—f—d that idiot! Where *are* you coming to?” which was exactly the question I had been asking myself for the last ten minutes.

The answer seemed quite ready, however, and assumed no less a shape than that of the 'Varsity Eight coming up “the Gut” in fine style, on its way back from doing the long course below Sandford.

I can hardly suppose it is necessary to explain what the “Gut” is. All readers of *Verdant Green* will remember the exciting experiences of that innocent youth in those narrow waters, but lest there should be any who fail to realise the position, let such imagine a yard of tape lying at full length, only twisted for about three inches in the middle, so that the latter half lies out of the straight line, but continuing parallel with the main direction, from the narrow turn in the middle. The first part of the tape is the Isis from Folly Bridge to the Gut, or narrow turn: the latter part is the rest of the river to Ifley.

Through this contracted bend, then, a Una, or cat-boat, was rushing wildly before a strong westerly breeze. The “wash” she was bringing down with her could best be

realised by the howl of execration which followed in her wake, and the yell of alarm from the boats ahead.

The bold mariners who were recklessly sweeping the river were two raw youths, one of very juvenile appearance, the other a little older, a good deal taller, and remarkable for the fiery red of his lank hair. Both "men" wore an expression of considerable surprise, not altogether unmingled with alarm. The younger was steering, the taller was stammering incoherently and pointing excitedly.

"Run her into the bank, you fool!"

"Haul down your sail!"

"Pull in your main sheet!"

"Go to the bottom!" or somewhere else.

But amidst all these cries from the towing-path the cat-boat still swept on to meet the 'Varsity Eight.

It was a critical moment.

"Mind your oars, stroke side!"

There was a rush all along the bank. The long, low craft was nearly swamped by the wash. Eight stalwart men glared angrily or derisively at the reckless navigators, and the danger was passed.

The cat-boat was rushing on, to wreck Ifley Lock apparently.

There was certainly no hesitation about the callow youth at the helm. If he did not know much about sailing, at least he could keep a straight course under rather trying circumstances. A very slight moment of doubt or the least error in steering and there would have been an eight-oared boat the less, and nine angry and disgusted men in the water, a confused mass of spluttering humanity, mingled with some profanity.

It was the first time either of the youths had been in a sailing boat all to themselves. The idea of running into the bank had not occurred to them, and they were still less conscious of the virtues of coming head to wind.

As a matter of fact, they were going so fast and there was so little room that this manœuvre was practically impossible.

Meanwhile the boat was flying along to utterly smash up Iffley Lock.

Something must be done, and something was done.

* * * * *

"Wh-why e-e-e-ver did-did-did-n't you f-f-fe-fellows g-g-get ou-ou-out of o-o-o-our w-w-w-wa-way?" I heard my red-haired friend expostulating, as I picked myself up out of the bottom of the boat, where the shock had sent me a little abruptly.

What those drenched men answered as they splashed through the mud to wade ashore, had better be unrecorded.

They took no interest in questions—at least, not ours. In fact, I have seldom met more unsympathetic, disagreeable young men. I really had hurt myself when I fell into the bottom of the boat, and said so, but no one seemed to mind in the least how I suffered.

They didn't even help to push our boat out of the bank, where it had made a pretty good dent, and this was all the more unamiable as they had now no boat of their own to bother about. As it seemed that we had done enough sailing that day, my friend and I walked back by the Cowley Road to Oxford, instead of returning by the tow-path. We thought Salter would find his boat all right, and

]

of the Commune, but whose bells were the anguish of the visitors on Sundays and holy days, for then a more discordant clangour was produced than any contrived by the most diabolical effort of the maddest of Burmese musicians.

On the walls of the *salle à manger* there were neither pictures nor advertisements to relieve the blank monotony of this strictly utilitarian dining-room.

There was not even the almost universal ormolu clock over the mantel-piece, where a cracked and damp-stained looking-glass reflected distortedly the nakedness of the chamber.

The company was nearly all assembled. At the head of the table sat a stout, elderly man, with the inevitable red rosette in his button-hole. By his side was a plump little middle-aged woman with a kindly look in her bright black eyes and flexible mouth, who was at the moment trying with much patience and perplexity to understand the astounding jargon which her opposite neighbour diffidently invented as a substitute for Parisian French.

There was no mistaking the nationality of this young man.

The ingenuous frankness of his expression, and easy cut of his light suit, undoubtedly proclaimed the Briton, even if his unfortunate accent and remarkable grammar did not sufficiently betray the fact.

Next to the young Englishman sat another man whose nationality also could not be for a moment in doubt. The small black tie, the tight-fitting black coat, the peaked beard and close-cropped hair, all declared the Frenchman.

There was an amused expression on his face as he glanced at the elderly gentleman opposite, who, however, was too absorbed in chasing the morsels of carrot and other

vegetables in the hot water before him to notice the by-play around.

The conversation had turned from the incidents of the afternoon to an ideal existence which the Frenchman was volubly describing under the guise of what he called a *jardin Cytherien*. The greater part of the glowing ideas of his neighbour was lost to the Englishman. In fact, at first he did not recognise under the foreign pronunciation the name of the Idalian Queen of Cyprus, the laughter-loving Aphrodité, and thought they were discussing some botanical or other natural history question.

For the elderly "decorated" gentleman was a learned Professor from Paris, who came down to Roscoff every summer, accompanied by a pupil or two as well as his wife, to explore the sea urchins and other marine curiosities with which the Breton coasts abound.

Indeed, so delicately veiled and altogether allegorical had been the description of this Cytherien garden, that it was only by the chuckles of the plump lady opposite, and an occasional deprecating remark when some too ardent detail glowed amid the brilliant imaginings of the lively student of molluscs, that the young Englishman divined that something more piquant than tomatoes or artichokes was being discussed.

"But what a pretty woman!" exclaimed the Professor, suddenly, as he raised his spectacled eyes for a moment to see what was causing the movement at the end of the room.

He had captured the last piece of carrot, and was now ready for something more sustaining.

The two young men looked round.

There was no doubt the Professor was a connoisseur of other styles of beauty than the charms of a zoophyte.

Marie, the *bonne*, was conducting with much clatter to their seats a tall handsome young man with a weak expression of face, and a lady elegantly dressed, but whose grace and beauty were even more conspicuous.

She was a blonde of most luxuriant type, whose sweetness of look was perhaps more attractive than her beauty.

"But," murmured the French natural history student, "it is Aphrodité herself. Her very walk proclaims the goddess. It is *Sainte Venus* in person."

The new arrivals were placed next the Englishman, and the conversation continued as before.

The French student was beginning to dilate anew on his Venusian Utopia when the Professor, who was of a distinctly amiable disposition, and courtly withal, in spite of an obesity rather phenomenal and an obliquity of vision sometimes a little disconcerting, began to talk to the new arrivals.

It presently appeared that they were much interested in boating excursions, and that madame delighted in sea-bathing, being an expert swimmer.

"No doubt," said the natural history student *sotto voce*, "for Venus rose from the sea."

Apparently only the Professor's wife heard the remark, for she made a little kind of prohibitory pout, quite lost on her *vis-à-vis*, who was leaning over his plate as far as he could to get a good look at the charming vision on the other side of the Englishman.

"Ah! so madame likes the sea?" said the Professor, bowing and beaming over his spectacles. "How fortunate! We are all agreed in our tastes. But promenades on the sea are very dangerous here. None but the most experienced should attempt to navigate these waters."

"Truly? Are they so dangerous, then?" asked the lady who had aroused so much interest.

"Indubitably so, madame. The currents are of the most violent, and the rocks are innumerable. Even we who are conducted by the most skilful mariners frequently run on the sunken reefs."

"But," interposed the Professor's wife, who took a kindly interest in drawing out the young Englishman, "you, monsieur, know as much about the dangers as anyone, and can tell us their full extent. Yes, madame," she continued, turning to the new arrivals, "monsieur is a most intrepid sailor, and although only a stranger is already *au fait* at all the complexities of this frightful coast. Indeed, there is no one I would sooner trust myself with."

This was said with a provoking glance at the naturalist, intended to repay him for his obvious interest in the too-attractive blonde.

"Truly? Then madame no doubt often goes for a sail?" answered the young lady demurely, with a quick look at her neighbour.

"My faith, she is not *si bête*!" murmured the French student, smiling a little sardonically this time.

"Me, madame!" exclaimed the lively little wife of the Professor, with a comical expression of horror. "Me! Never! I adore the sea to look at, but to trust myself to it! Never! Never!"

"Madame is so bad a sailor," said her husband, "that not even the skilfullest mariner or the most enchanting companion could divert her from her deplorable sensations."

"Truly? What a pity! I, on the contrary, love the sea, and am never ill."

The young Englishman, who had not spoken since his

neighbour's arrival, looked up on hearing this, and ~~in~~ rather a shy way said abruptly :

"Then, madame, I hope I may have the pleasure of ~~of~~ taking you for a sail some day."

"Thank you, monsieur. It would be delightful. Would it not, Theodore?" replied the young woman, turning to her companion, who smiled approval as he also thanked the Englishman for his offer.

"You have a boat, monsieur? A *yack*, no doubt. May I ask what tonnage she is?"

"Oh, she is very small. I bought her from a Breton fisherman here. He was wounded at Amiens during the war, where he was fighting under Faïdherbe."

"But she is commodious, monsieur," said the Professor. "In fact she is one of our most favourite pleasure-boats. And it is true what madame says, monsieur is an admirable captain."

An idea seemed suddenly to occur to the gentleman who had been addressed as "Theodore." He spoke a few words to his companion.

"But no!" was the reply. "It would be asking too much. Besides, Morlaix is not on the sea."

"Pardon, madame," said the Professor, "Morlaix is on an inlet or arm of the sea. It is, however, a most perilous voyage to go there from here—so dangerous, that few of the boatmen about here care to undertake the risk except in very fine weather."

"Ah, then, that settles it," replied Monsieur Theodore. "You see, Mimi, it would be too hazardous."

"The voyage could no doubt be accomplished," continued the Professor; "but you must secure the services of the best mariners."

"I will take you with pleasure," broke in the young Englishman.

"Ah, but it is too dangerous!" exclaimed the Professor's wife. "Besides, you have never been there, have you, monsieur?"

This was true. The young Englishman became silent. He seemed, perhaps, to have shown too great eagerness to take out the new-comers.

It appeared, however, that madame had left behind at the hotel where they were staying at Morlaix a valuable dressing-bag. It contained her jewellery, and she was naturally very anxious to obtain it again.

At that time Roscoff was only approached by a very slow *diligence* from Morlaix through St. Pol de Leon. With a fair wind and tide the picturesque old town could be reached in less time than by the dreary, dilapidated coach, driven by a greasy peasant, whose chief characteristic was his amazing power for consuming liquor of all sorts.

Thinking this over, the Englishman presently suggested that as he was going for a sail early next day, and had intended exploring the Rade de Morlaix, he might just as well go and bring madame's travelling-bag back with him, if she would trust him.

"Of course madame would do that. But think of the danger, monsieur? Hear what Monsieur——"

And as the fair speaker hesitated, the Professor beamingly said, "Le Mire, madame."

"Thank you. Yes, hear what Monsieur le Mire says."

"Ah, madame, if you talk of the danger you will only make him more obstinate. You don't know how rash monsieur is. He circumnavigated the Ile de Bas only the

second day after he had bought the *yack*. It was incredible!" exclaimed Madame le Mire.

"I don't really think there is the least danger. If I did, of course I should never have suggested taking you, madame," the Englishman remarked in an apologetic tone.

"There, did I not say so?" cried Madame le Mire again.

"You see, this monsieur is so *enragé* with the sea that he is quite incapable of realising its terrific danger."

"But, madame," put in the natural history student, "is there anything remarkable in that? Is not this the case in all great passions? Whoever sees danger when one courts the object of one's adoration?" and the speaker glanced suggestively at the comfortable figure of the spectacled professor as if he would imply that not even that benevolent but ponderous scientist would hinder him if he were really desperately in love.

"Bah! you are a *farceur d'une petite localité*!" laughed the plump, vivacious little Professor's wife. "Besides, Monsieur Edouard, I know you much too well. Words suit you far better than action. *Allez!*"

"But, madame!" exclaimed the student with a deprecatory shrug of his shoulders, "that is a statement I shall call upon you to verify."

Meanwhile the Englishman had been urging the pleasure it would give him to have an object for his sail. And his neighbour was leaving the discussion to be carried on by her companion, who, after profusely thanking Monsieur l'Anglais, finally said he would really be very grateful if monsieur should happen to be going to Morlaix, but that he was on no account to risk anything for so small a matter.

Dinner by this time was nearly over. The visitors were retiring to the little terrace of the hotel, which overlooked the sea.

Here coffee was served, and the ladies chatted round the small iron tables, while the men smoked and lounged on the wall against which the sea was gently splashing, for the tide was high and the weather beautiful.

No wonder the Professor said the coast was dangerous; above all for a stranger.

From the terrace a magnificent view was obtained of the rock-strewn sea.

In front, and distant barely a quarter of a mile, were two piles of pyramidal rocks rising abruptly from apparently deep water, and separated from each other by a wide channel. To the west of these lay a small green islet. Beyond it again stretched a long low island distant fully a mile and a half. In the centre rose a tall lighthouse of magnificent proportions. Here and there were scattered a few cottages on the wind-swept land.

Between the nearer rocks and this island the sea was studded with innumerable low, black heads of jagged rocks showing where ugly reefs lay hidden; while to the east of the two pyramidal rocks were many more islets, one looking strangely like the spiky back of an armadillo or mediæval dragon—another, the most distant seawards, was higher than all the rest, seeming more like the summit of a submerged mountain, and rising from the waves in two cones to the height of perhaps eighty feet.

Between all these islands were again countless black heads showing just above the sea. On the outermost of these reefs a long line of white rising now and again in ghost-like vapour, tinged with the pink of fading day as the

sun set in glory over the low land of the Ile de Bas, told of the churning Atlantic, where the long rollers thundered among the tangled rocks.

"You see, madame, I was right," said the Professor, as he removed his cigar to take a sip of coffee. "The coast is dangerous, as you see; but the dangers you do not see are still more terrible. The tides here rise from ten to twelve *mètres*. There are, therefore, prodigious currents, and for all states of the tide there are hidden heads of rocks waiting to catch the unwary. These sunken dangers, too, cause the currents to run in every conceivable direction, making eddies and whirlpools the most distracting."

"But, monsieur, how terrific!" exclaimed the young woman, to whom the Professor had attached himself with a benevolent attention more gratifying apparently to his own good-nature than that of anyone else, unless, perhaps, it was Monsieur Theodore.

"I shall never care to venture on the sea now. Think, Theodore, of all the risks. We ought to have gone to Trouville or St. François. And the bathing, too; where does one bathe, monsieur?"

"Here, madame, *en face*," said the Professor, beaming benevolently at the pretty face and dainty figure before him. "Here," with a sweep of his arm as he turned to the sea below.

"Here, monsieur!" exclaimed the lady. "Here? But there is no *plage*. There are no sands, no cabins, no tents."

"No, madame, it is true. But you descend from your chamber. It is quite close. There is the staircase," pointing to a wooden kind of balcony projecting from the centre of the terrace. "There are, on a stage below, three cabins. Here you can complete your preparations for the bath, and



"HERE, MADAME, *en face*," SAID THE PROFESSOR.

commence your toilette before mounting to your chamber to accomplish the charming arrangement which is so replete with delightful effects," and the Professor beamed more radiantly than ever behind his gold-rimmed spectacles.

"But, madame, how gallant is the Professor this evening!" remarked the student; "I think he, too, would like a walk in my *jardin Cytherien*."

"But hold your tongue, then, with your gardens and such nonsense," laughed the Professor's wife. "Is the Professor a man to take any such walks with his figure and at his age? *Bah, allez!* Monsieur Edouard, talk of something else."

"And whose is that pretty little boat there?" asked Madame Theodore, pointing to a small cutter which was riding to her moorings between the terrace and the two pyramidal rocks.

"Ah, that? That is the *yack* of Monsieur l'Anglais," replied the Professor; "she is a smart little boat, is she not?"

"Ah, but someone is going on board!" exclaimed Madame Theodore, as a little punt shot out of the deep shadow of the sea wall and glided alongside the small cutter.

"Certainly; that is the captain and owner. He always goes off to see if all is right before night," replied the Professor.

"Oh, Theodore, how lovely it is! Can't we go for a row? The sea is like glass."

"But surely we can. No doubt monsieur can tell us where we can hire a boat."

"Ah, *par exemple*, that is not easy. At the quay yonder," pointing to the west of the little terrace, "one might sometimes get a *canot*, but they are not well provided at Roscoff in the matter of pleasure boats."

"See, there is Monsieur l'Anglais returning. No doubt he would take madame with all the pleasure in the world," suggested Madame le Mire, smiling.

"Oh, no, we could not ask him, could we, Theodore?"

"Hardly. Besides, there is no room for three. No, Mimi, we must give it up to-night; you are tired, too, after your journey."

"Tired! what an idea, *mon ami*. Do you not know I am never tired?" exclaimed the young woman, who, to do her justice, certainly looked the picture of health. "Come, let us go for a stroll; perhaps we shall find a boat."

"And who do you think they are?" said Madame le Mire as she watched the young couple cross the court-yard and disappear under the archway leading into the *place* beyond.

"How can I tell?" replied the Professor with a good-humoured shrug of his shoulders; "very likely a newly married couple on their honeymoon."

"Possibly," remarked the Professor's wife, "but she is very self-possessed. It is clear it is no *mariage de convenance* on his part at any rate.—Ah! monsieur, so you have returned. Is your *yack* quite safe?"

"Quite, thank you, madame," answered the Englishman, looking round the terrace as if expecting to see someone who was not there.

"Ah, you are late, monsieur. Had you been here a little sooner you might have taken the new-comers for a promenade on the sea. La belle dame was wishing to go."

"Was she? What a pity! Do you know where they have gone?"

"I think they went to the little harbour, where the ferry goes to the Ile de Bas," replied Madame le Mire, good-naturedly. "They have only just gone."

But the young Englishman did not wait to hear more. He had already run down the ladder again, and the regular thud of oars told the party above that he was rowing swiftly away.

"But he is very much taken, Monsieur Edouard, is he not?" said Madame le Mire, smiling.

"Undoubtedly, madame, but Monsieur Theodore need not be jealous. He is too much of a *cocquelin*, as Balzac would say, to be dangerous. Much too *naïf*."

"Don't be too sure, *mon ami*. You are not quite perfect in the knowledge of our sex yet, however much you may think so. A *cocquelin*, as you call him, may be very attractive sometimes, especially if he is gallant and active. What may be ridiculous at Paris can be very fascinating by the sea, especially in such a *pays sauvage* as this—oh, look there!"

The student and the Professor turned towards the direction where Madame le Mire pointed.

A little boat was being rowed towards the low green island beyond the pyramidal rocks. In it were two figures: one was evidently a woman, the other was that of a man.

"But it is not the Englishman," said the natural history student; "it is Monsieur Theodore, and he does not know much about rowing."

"That is evident. Look! And the tide is running down very strongly. Why ever did not the Englishman take the oars or go with them?"

"No doubt they thought the boat too small, and the young woman would not go out alone so soon as that, even if her husband would have let her," said the Professor.

"But," he exclaimed, "they will be on that rock directly! Ah! there is the Englishman calling to them. But they

pay no attention. *Ma foi!* they will be upset. He does not know which way to pull."

"See! There is another boat going after them. It is the Englishman! How he is pulling, and what a clumsy great boat he has got! Ah! he has caught them up. But only just in time. Even now the other refuses to be helped. Ah, yes! he is giving his rope to the Englishman. He is making it fast. Ah! now they are being pulled away safely. What do you say now, Monsieur Edouard? Do you think he is dangerous—that Englishman?"

"*Ma foi!* madame, I think he has profited by an occasion, but how far he knows how to improve it remains to be seen. He may create a sense of gratitude, but that is a long way from being dangerous."

"You forget, monsieur, that gratitude is a sense of favours to come."

"Yes, madame, but it is for the lady to grant the favours, and in this case it is the gentleman who has aroused the gratitude."

"No doubt he will be grateful presently," remarked Madame le Mire.

"Madame no doubt understands her own charming sex," retorted the student, with a meaning smile.

And so the evening passed, as most bright summer evenings do in a quiet seaside place. There was a little more of the usual badinage, a little more quiet chat. The glow of the cigars became more ruddy as the dusk spread over the sea. The stars came out, and the great eye on the Ile de Bas looked far away over the Atlantic to warn sailors off the dangerous Breton coast. The heavy dew spread over sea and land, giving promise of a fine night and a warm day for the morrow.

Everyone retired early in that unsophisticated spot. But the young Englishman lingered after all the visitors were gone.

"But, *par exemple*," exclaimed the hard voice of Marie, the *bonne*, "not gone to bed? You are late, Monsieur François. Are you thinking of your *bonne amie*?"

"Oh, Marie, is that you? Look here, I want to have my breakfast early to-morrow; and will you have a basket packed, as I shall be away all day? I'm going to Morlaix to-morrow."

"Not in your little *canot*, Monsieur François?" exclaimed Marie.

"Yes, certainly. Why not?"

"Oh, *par exemple*! You are too rash! You will be drowned some day!"

"Well, you will see about it, won't you? Mind, an early breakfast. Good-night, Marie," and with a yawn the Englishman retired to bed.

Next morning, when Madame Theodore came on to the terrace, before going in to *déjeuner*, she missed the little *yack*, as it was called.

"Yes, madame," said the Professor, who had also strolled on to the terrace. "Monsieur François started for Morlaix at an early hour. It was necessary to catch the first of the tide."

"Will it take long, the voyage?" asked Madame.

"That depends," replied the Professor. "If it should fall calm it may take an indefinite time; but there is always the tide. The rocks are innumerable, that is the difficulty, and the channels are very tortuous. Besides, there are no buoys to help to show the proper course."

"He is very rash, then," remarked the young woman, who looked even prettier this morning than the night

before. "He must be an excellent sailor, though, not to have come to any harm among all these dangers."

"Undoubtedly," replied the Professor. "And it is the more remarkable as he was absolutely a novice in the art only three weeks ago when he bought the little boat. So ignorant was he that the authorities thought of taking away his *permis de navigation*; but he soon showed them he could manage a boat as well as any of the fishermen."

"Who is he? Do you know, monsieur?"

"*Ma foi*, I do not know much. He is a Bachelier of the University of Oxford. I believe very intelligent, as indeed one may see. A young man of a certain position. But what he does here I do not know. He is said to be studying our language. But the English are not strong in the matter of foreign tongues. As you heard, no doubt, he has not made much progress yet. Ah, there is *déjeuner*. I am not sorry. Are you, madame? This air gives one a good appetite."

At *déjeuner* the conversation continued to turn mostly on the strange rashness of the eccentric Englishman.

The world of Roscoff being at that time very limited, any little event out of the usual run of the regular life was discussed and commented on as if it were an Eastern question, and as the visiting world of Roscoff was mainly made up of quiet people from Paris, or the better classes of Finisterre and the Côtes du Nord, from Brest, Morlaix, or Rennes, the doings of the young Englishman afforded constant interest, and were even treated of from an almost archæological and historic point of view, as typical of that fierce race of islanders whose piratical exploits in the hundred years' war had kept Brittany in constant alarm, in spite of their having restored the Duchy to its lawful dukes—the descendants

of the Alains, and Howells, and Hervés of the days when the Capets were only mayors of the palace in the Court the degenerate offspring of the great King Charles.

"It is indeed strange to see this inherited instinct renewing itself in this original way," said the Professor. "It is the same instinct which makes ducklings reared by a hen take to the water. The English are a race of adventurers, and they cannot contradict their destiny."

"And what are we?" asked Madame Theodore.

"We, madame? We are the most enlightened people on the face of the earth. If strict impartiality would compel me to declare that our journalists sometimes somewhat distort the truth, patriotism will still oblige me to say that no nation in the world can approach us in martial ardour, enlightened enterprise, chivalrous devotion to all that is beautiful, noble, and most enthralling in your lovely sex, or in our achievements in the arts and sciences."

As there was no one present who had the least inclination to assert the contrary, the Professor's remarks were allowed to go unchallenged.

The vacant chair of the absent Englishman, however, seemed mutely to suggest a contrast between words and deeds, and possibly Madame Theodore might think that words and compliments were not of much use in restoring her lost jewellery and travelling-bag, and that after all it was not one of the most enlightened nation who was risking a good deal, perhaps, on her behalf. The silence of a vacant chair can sometimes be very eloquent.

When the little world of the Hôtel des Bains de Mer sauntered on to the terrace to smoke its after-breakfast cigar and quaff the stimulating coffee, it discovered that its vision was a good deal limited.

"But, *par exemple*, what a mist! How damp it is! One cannot see half a yard hardly."

"Listen, too, to the clattering at sea! They are beating their bells, the poor fishermen."

It had indeed come on very thick, and quite suddenly too, as so often happens on the Atlantic seaboard.

"Ah, what a mischance! That poor young man!" exclaimed kind-hearted Madame le Mire.

The Professor looked grave as he thoughtfully smoked his cigar.

"It may not last long," he said, presently. "These sea fogs go off as quickly as they come. But it will make it very difficult for him to find his way."

"How far do you think he has gone now?" asked Madame Theodore.

"Humph!" said the Professor, meditatively. "He may have reached the Château du Taureau with luck, but the breeze has been very light. If he has he will have passed all the dangers and ought to be at Morlaix by mid-day. It is possible, too, there may be no fog where he is. These fogs are very partial."

"Then he ought to be back this evening?"

"Certainly, or else he would miss his tide. In that case, he would hardly be likely to return before to-morrow."

"Are there any places where he could stop?"

"Truly there are. The Rade de Morlaix has many excellent little nooks where one who knew of them could pass the night; but remember, our sailor is a complete stranger and has never been farther from Roscoff than some two miles."

When the visitors sat down to dinner again that evening the conversation very soon reverted to the absent Englishman.

The day had turned out finer than seemed likely after breakfast. By two the mist had cleared away and the afternoon had been a sweltering calm.

"It is a little fatiguing, I think," said Monsieur Theodore, who certainly looked languid, in answer to Madame le Mire's inquiry as to how he liked Roscoff.

"Is it not?—above all when one walks over sand and granite rocks?"

"There are no trees either, to afford any shade. Madame and I were obliged to sit down under a heap of dried seaweed to find any shelter from the sun."

"And the seaweed smelt horribly," added Madame Theodore. "But we obtained a lovely view over the sea."

"Which way did you go?" asked the Professor.

"Oh, I don't know, somewhere where we saw nothing but rocks; beyond a little white chapel on a promontory."

"I know, that is the Chapelle de Ste. Bärbe. You were looking over the Rade de Morlaix. It is among those reefs the Englishman is finding his way."

"What a poor dinner you are making, Mimi!" remarked Monsieur Theodore. "Why don't you take some of those artichokes? They are perfect. It is the dish of the country; onions, artichokes, and potatoes, you know, are the wealth of Roscoff."

"It is too hot to eat, *mon ami*."

"Madame is fatigued, too. The sun has been very hot. You should stay on the terrace or indoors during the heat of the afternoon," said Madame le Mire.

"So I said," rejoined Monsieur Theodore. "But nothing would satisfy madame but a walk out to that oven of a promontory."

"I wonder if I shall get my travelling-bag to-night? What do you think, monsieur?"

"Impossible to say, madame. There may have been more breeze elsewhere than here," replied the Professor, shrugging his shoulders. "But, frankly, I should think it highly unlikely. What is most probable is that you will not see it before this time to-morrow. There is every appearance of a thick fog coming up again to-night. If so, no one could navigate those rocky channels in the dark."

As the sea mist rendered it too chilly to sit on the terrace, the visitors were obliged to keep to their own rooms, for in those days the attractions of the Hôtel des Bains de Mer did not embrace even a salon or a billiard-room.

"How very dark it is!" said Madame le Mire, shuddering, as she closed the window after taking a look out into the damp night. "That poor young man, I wonder where he is!"

"No doubt he is still at Morlaix," replied the Professor. "It would be absolutely impossible for him to be sailing now. One cannot see a *mètre* ahead. He won't arrive before to-morrow afternoon at earliest."

PART II.

More Foggy Still.

NEXT morning Marie, the *bonne*, might have been seen tapping at a bedroom door rather earlier than she usually called people staying in the hotel.

"It is me, madame. I have brought your travelling-bag. Monsieur l'Anglais sends it up with his compliments."

When Madame le Mire and the Professor entered the *salle à manger* they were much surprised to see the young Englishman already seated at table and evidently doing good business in the bill of fare. Madame Theodore, too, was also down.

"Why, however did you get here?" exclaimed the Professor. "But I'm very glad to see you back. I suppose you left your boat at Morlaix?"

"Not I, monsieur, she is at the harbour quay. There was not water enough to bring her up to her moorings."

"But how did you get here, then?" said the Professor, still more astonished. "Was it not a very thick night?"

"Very. Marie, bring some more of that sole. I'm as hungry as a hunter."

"You never went to Morlaix, then?"

"Didn't I, though! Ask madame here."

The Professor looked inquiringly at the pretty young woman, whose eyes seemed brighter than ever that morning.

"Yes, indeed, and I'm terrified when I think of the dangers Monsieur François went through to get me my travelling-bag."

Madame le Mire smiled. "Good morning, madame, I hope *monsieur votre mari* is quite well?"

"Thank you, madame, he is quite well, only he is very lazy."

"Ah, the air of Roscoff is too keen. It always makes visitors sleepy when they first come. And so, Monsieur François, you really did manage to find your way all among those terrific reefs, and in the dark, too? It is wonderful. You must indeed have a great destiny before you to be so preserved. Your good angel was surely especially watching over you."

"Do you know, I couldn't sleep last night," said Madame Theodore.

"Ah, that is why you are down so early, no doubt," remarked the Professor.

"But, Monsieur François, do tell us how you got on—or are you too tired?"

"Tired? Not a bit of it, madame, only I'm downright hungry."

The ladies laughed.

But gradually, by dint of questioning at judicious pauses, the adventures of the little boat and its rash skipper were eventually unfolded.

All went well across the bay of St. Pol de Leon. There was little wind, but what there was blew favourably. There seemed to be a fog in the offing, but as the little boat closed with the low rocky promontory which separated the bay of St. Pol from the Rade de Morlaix, the sky overhead kept clear as the land was neared.

"There are rocks there, and no mistake," said the skipper of the *Aristide Marie*, for such was the original name of the little craft. "I daresay I did not go the best way, but I had no chart or compass, and only steered where I saw blue water.

"It was a lovely sail, and by the time I reached the Château du Taureau I felt no further anxiety about the reefs. After that all was plain sailing, for there is a beautiful stretch of land-locked water quite free of rocks for some five miles right up to the end of the *rade*.

"Here the hills seemed absolutely to bar all further progress, and I wondered however I was to get up to Morlaix.

"As I came up to this apparently impassable barrier, I found the stream turned abruptly to the right, becoming

very narrow, and with high land rising steeply on each side.

“The sail from this narrow turn to Morlaix was tedious, as the wind almost entirely dropped in this kind of deep ditch ; but I eventually reached a ferry, some mile or so from the town, and walked the rest of the way. When I came out from the hotel I saw I could just save the half-ebb, and hurried back as fast as I could.

“It was lucky I did, for I arrived just as the *Aristide* was taking the mud, or rather hard ground, off the ferry, where she would have ‘listed’ badly.

“With a little help from the girl of the ferry, it did not take long to push off, and with the strong ebb-tide I soon found myself at the entrance of the long stretch of land-locked water, which was gleaming like glass under the full glare of the afternoon sun.

“I saw it was going to be a long pull if I wanted to see Roscoff before nightfall. It was then about four o’clock. It *was* hot, and no mistake ! However, by dint of sticking to it, I managed to get down half the way before the tide turned, when a little, fresh, ‘cool’ or light air sprang up, and I began to think my progress would be rather quicker. At any rate it was easier.

“That Rade de Morlaix is pretty, though, and a rare piece of water for a regatta ; I must sail you up there some day, madame,” added the young man, turning to his pretty neighbour, who was taking much interest in the wonderful jargon which was doing duty for French in the absence of better. Besides, her jewel-case, which she had just recovered, was a very eloquent discourse, and spoke no broken French.

Perhaps most ladies will fully sympathise with the remark of Gretchen’s nurse, when the girl discovers the

casket of jewels on her table, and receives for answer to her anxious question as to whether she thinks Faust really loves her, "Well, well, child, to be sure he does, for I know of no greater proof of love than diamonds."

But the nurse was old, and maybe her memory was bad. There may be other and even greater proofs.

Anyway, it was easy to see that the tale now unfolding was quite interesting to the pretty Madame Theodore.

"And you were able to admire the landscape, with night coming on and you all alone in that *canot*!" exclaimed Madame le Mire.

"Why, certainly," answered the Englishman, "why not? And besides, the *Aristide Marie* is not so small as all that; she is fully eighteen feet long, and covered in forward."

The Professor chuckled, and might be heard murmuring:

"What a type! 'Tis the soul of Jarl Rognwald come to life again. And so, Monsieur François, you really enjoyed your sail?"

"Enjoyed it! Of course I did. It was grand, a delightful adventure, so far, anyway; for had I not been successful up till then at least? I confess, by-and-by I did find it a little bothering, but now it is all over. Why, I wouldn't have missed it for anything."

"*Mon Dieu!*" murmured Madame le Mire. "He must be *fou*. Poor young man! What tastes! What diversions!"

"But do continue, monsieur," said Madame Theodore; "I am so interested."

"And he is not dangerous," whispered the Professor's wife to the natural history student.

"*Ma foi*, no," replied that knowing young man, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Can anyone be who finds amusement in solitude, and prefers a night in a little cockle-

shell of a boat among terrible rocks to a night ashore and all its possibilities?"

And again the student shrugged his shoulders in a manner wherein pity was mingled with contempt, and smiled suggestively, as only one well initiated in the ways of the Quartier Latin can smile.

"Aha, Monsieur Edouard, you do not know everything. *Allez!* You will see. Our pretty neighbour opposite is decidedly interested—wait."

"Bah, madame! interest is not love, and to be dangerous one must inspire love."

"Remain quiet, my friend. That is a large word, and embraces many complexities. But listen, it is interesting truly. Daring and *sangfroid* are always fascinating. There!" and the bright little woman turned to eat her shrimps and listen to the *malheureux accent* of the incomprehensible Englishman, with a little wave of her hand to the knowing student, as if to say, "You think a great deal of yourself, my friend, but it is better in matters of the heart to be thought well of by someone else."

"I must confess-I became a little tired of looking at the small pagoda-like erection on a steep rock about half a mile in front of me. After two hours' contemplation, even the most beautiful thing may pall on one," the Englishman was saying.

"Fie, fie, monsieur, where is your gallantry?" exclaimed Madame le Mire.

"Why, madame, what have I said that is unbecoming? I meant, of course, inanimate objects. Indeed, I expressly said 'thing.' So that there was no question of gallantry in the remark."

"*Bien, bien*, that is well said," nodded the Professor. "Monsieur is not to be entrapped in that way."

"Pray go on, monsieur; I am longing to hear how you escaped all those awful dangers which were about to beset you," exclaimed the pretty blonde. "Ah, Theodore, come, you are just in time to hear the most interesting part. Be quick and sit down. How lazy you are!"

So Monsieur Theodore, who had just entered the room, after a few words of greeting and thanks to the Englishman, did as he was told like a sensible man, ate the simple fare Marie brought him, and listened with more or less interest to the further development of the adventures of the night.

"Well, by dark I managed to come abreast of the first high rock on which a small lighthouse is built, and which separates the inner part of the *rade* from the outer part, where are all the reefs and sunken rocks.

"The night was dark, but I could see the rock looming up close to me, and above it was the bright light of the *phare*. It was just about high water again, and there was a nice little steering breeze.

"I had passed the rock, and was trying to peer through the blackness ahead, for rocks were all around me I knew, when, happening to look back to take my bearings as well as I could from the light, it seemed to have disappeared suddenly. Only a minute or so before I had been almost dazzled by its overpowering brilliancy.

"I rubbed my eyes in astonishment: I thought I must be bewitched. Then I thought perhaps a rock intervened. But I could see absolutely nothing."

"But, *mon Dieu!* what a position, what a situation!" murmured Madame le Mire.

"Do go on!" exclaimed Madame Theodore.

"But, *morbleu*, let the poor young man eat," remonstrated the Professor.

"Ah, that is true. How selfish I am!" and the pretty young woman gave a deprecatory pucker of her lips, which caused a dimple in her cheek, already quite fascinating enough, to be even more bewitching.

The natural history student noticed it with warm admiration, for he had changed his seat since the new arrivals; but the Englishman was too busy on his breakfast, and the difficulties of his narrative, to take any note of the by-play around. If only his admiring listeners had known it, they would have been still more surprised to find that of the two difficulties and dangers, that of navigating the Rade de Morlaix in the dark was far less arduous than picking his way through the experience of the voyage in a strange language; and as for the dangers, did not the Greeks of old dread the Sirens more than any rocks?

"And so you really quite lost sight of the lighthouse in that astonishingly abrupt way? But it was surprising, monsieur—desolating, frightful. *Mon Dieu!* And here you sit quietly telling us of it as if it were an every-day occurrence. But I am burning to know what came next. And you really were not frightened?"

So exclaimed Madame le Mire, whose kindly interruption at least allowed breathing space for the narrator, as well as giving him time to swallow a few more morsels.

"The fact was, only it took me a few minutes to realise it," continued the Englishman, "I had run into as dense a fog as anyone could wish to see or avoid. I could not even see the bow of the boat, much less anything a yard ahead. I hadn't the remotest idea of my course, for I had

no compass, or even a light to see it by if I had. My only guide was the noise of the sea grinding on the rocks around."

"But it is astonishing!—frightful!" murmured the ever-sympathetic wife of the Professor.

"Didn't you anchor?" asked Madame le Mire.

"No, I didn't think seriously of it. The idea did occur to me, but I had only a very short 'painter,' and as it was high tide, I was afraid of finding myself on a rock as the sea fell. So I got out the oars and sculled a bit, whenever I heard the noise on the rocks too loudly. There was very little breeze, fortunately, and by listening attentively to the horrid grinding noise, I managed to keep clear of the dangers which I knew were all around and below me.

"The tide was swirling out. So much I knew. If only I could avoid a smash, which of course might happen any minute, I hoped when dawn broke to find myself well away out to sea, and ready to make tracks for Roscoff as soon as I could see my whereabouts.

"However, as things looked a bit doubtful, I took care to strap your travelling-bag round me, madame, so that at least your property should remain above water as long as I did."

"*Mon Dieu!* What chivalry! What gallantry. Can any woman's heart not be touched by such delicate devotion!" exclaimed Madame le Mire. "I will wager anything you would never have thought of that, Monsieur Edouard," she added, maliciously.

The natural history student shrugged his shoulders as he replied, with a pitying smile:

"No, truly; I would rather attach myself to something very different. But these English have such queer tastes."

Madame Theodore during this aside had glanced at her husband with tears in her eyes, murmuring in a low voice :

"Think ! Theodore. Think ! How awful it would have been ! Could I ever have worn my jewels again ? Oh ! think !" and a shudder shook the young woman from head to foot. A little more and it was obvious the situation would become rather painful. The possibilities suggested were too gruesome.

"So your anticipations were realised," put in the Professor hurriedly, "and you escaped all dangers, as we know. Well, you are indeed a mariner,—a true descendant of your invincible Nelson."

"But tell us, monsieur, how did you escape ? We haven't heard half your adventures. Please go on," said Madame Theodore.

"Well," replied the Englishman, "I had a good many shaves, no doubt, and the night seemed uncommonly long. I don't suppose I shall forget the noise of that grinding and girding on the rocks, like the rasping of a saw on tough wood, for a long time. At last a faint pallor seemed to be spreading around me. I could see the bow of the boat. The water, too, on each side of me was visible. It seemed to be curling and eddying in a curious way.

"I looked over the side. To my astonishment I could see seaweed below me. I looked ahead, and right in front, abreast almost of the mast, was a jagged head of rock, only just showing above the water."

"*Mon Dieu ! Mon Dieu !* Poor young man !" broke from the tender-hearted Madame le Mire, as she clasped her hands in horror.

"I got out the oars and began to row as hard as I could away from the danger. How I cleared it I don't know.

There seemed other reefs close to me on either side. It was bewildering. I had no idea where I was. Suddenly, a yellow patch of sand appeared out of the mist. I rowed straight for it and ran ashore. It was a comfort at least to have found a resting-place free from rocks.

"In a few minutes the boat was left high and dry. The tide was still ebbing.

"I must confess I felt a bit hungry. Fortunately, there was some wine left, as well as a couple of hard-boiled eggs and a roll. After I had cleared up these I felt better.

"The mist was as thick as ever, but I thought I would get out and see if the sand was an isolated bank, or had any land belonging to it. It was quite pleasant taking a walk again.

"After going about a hundred yards, the sand became drier. Evidently I was nearing high-water-mark. In another minute I came to a line of dry seaweed, the flotsam and jetsam which is a sure sign of the tidal limit. I could even see some scanty grass.

"The sandpipers were whistling to each other and the oxy birds were crying their plaintive note all around.

"There was a smell in the damp air as of fields and farming. A bell vibrated across the dull atmosphere. Deep and heavy it boomed. It was four o'clock in the morning.

"Going on a little, I saw a dark mass looming in front. What it was I could not tell. It might be a house. I approached it. There were loose boulders all round, and I soon found it was no house.

"I had come across one of those numerous masses of decomposed granite with which all this coast abounds. How high it was I could not tell. I began to climb up. When I reached the top, I seemed to have entered a new world ;

it was like the enchanted land wherein Jack found himself after climbing the beanstalk.

“Below me lay the white mist : above was a clear sky, rosy with the rising sun. Away in the direction where I had left the boat were a few jagged peaks showing above the mist. I turned round and faced in the opposite direction. Here the mist had nearly all floated away.

“Below me were two rude cottages. The inmates were already astir ; I could see the fowls pecking about, a cock was busily crowing on a heap of rotten seaweed. Beyond were fields, hedges, a winding lane, leading away to the low horizon where two dumpy spires and one very high and graceful one showed that there must be a large town, or at any rate a large church—there was no mistaking those spires. One was the Kreisker, the other the cathedral of St. Pol de Leon.”

“But where had you got to then?” exclaimed the Professor.

“Why, I had managed to get through all those reefs in the outer Rade, and had run aground on the sand in the large bay of Paimpol ; I was only about four miles off Blosson Point.”

“*Quelle chance!* And you really were as near as all that ? Why, you could have walked over and been here by five o’clock.”

“Yes, but I could not leave the boat.”

“Couldn’t leave the boat ! *Mon Dieu!* who would have cared for the boat after such an escape ? Not you, Monsieur Edouard, I’m sure.”

“Not I, truly. Besides, I should have been so anxious to win a smile from madame by restoring her property to her that I should have hurried over at once.”

"But did you never hear of the Spartan and his shield, or a standard-bearer and his colours?" asked the Professor. "Monsieur was quite right to think of his boat. How would he have been laughed at if he had returned on foot!"

"Yes, indeed, he did quite right; only the risks were again dreadful, no doubt," commented Madame Theodore.

"No, the risks were nearly all over now," said the Englishman. "By the time I reached the boat the mist had almost disappeared, the tide was rising, and a crisp little breeze was curling the water among the mazy reefs. These, however, were rapidly disappearing, too. By the time I was afloat only half the dangers were to be seen. In another half hour I was off Blosson, and in a little time more I had run alongside the lower jetty, and here I am, not a bit worse for a very tidy little piece of navigation."

"You are indeed a sailor," said Madame Theodore. "Now come, let us go on to the terrace, my friend," she added, turning to her husband. "It will be fresher out there."

The rest of that day nothing more was seen of the Englishman or Monsieur and Madame Theodore. At dinner, too, their places were vacant.

"But what has become of them?" asked Madame le Mire.

"I hear that the *Aristide Marie* was seen anchored off Tisaoson," replied the natural history student.

"But what does that explain, my friend?"

"Why, I hear they took a substantial *déjeuner* with them, for of course it is a good place for a picnic, you know."

"So you think Monsieur François had sufficient energy after his night out to go for a picnic on Tisaoson?"

"It appears so. You see, the experiences of the night had already given him a good appetite this morning."

"Ah, truly! And Monsieur Theodore, is he ~~as~~ *suragé* for the sea as his pretty wife, think you?"

"Ah, madame, what will you?" said the natural history student, with a shrug. "What a pretty woman wishes is always to be enjoyed by someone. If the husband does not like it, *tant pis*. But it does not prevent the wishes being carried out any the less."

"*Mon Dieu!* What a philosopher you are, Monsieur Edouard. But here they come, and madame is not looking as if she had failed in accomplishing her wishes. And how have you enjoyed your day, madame and monsieur?"

"Delightfully, madame. It was ravishing. The sea was so blue, and the sky so bright; and Monsieur François is the very prince of sailors."

"Where did you go?"

"We landed on some island, I don't know what it is called—a name something like Tisane; there we scrambled and had a most delightful picnic, and then we scrambled again. Was it not delicious, eh, monsieur?" said Madame Theodore, turning to her husband.

"Splendid!" replied that young man, suppressing a yawn with difficulty. "Only I found the sun uncommonly hot."

"Ah, you should have come where we went," retorted his wife. "We had a deliciously breezy seat."

"And where did you go, then?" asked Madame le Mire, glancing at the natural history student.

"Oh, we climbed up to the top of the island and had a glorious view all over the sea. and I saw where Monsieur

François had been wandering all night among those awful rocks. It is terrific to look at them !” and Madame Theodore shuddered.

“ So, then, you spent all day on that deserted island ! How romantic ! Quite like Paul and Virginia,” said the natural history student. “ But a little fatiguing, too, I should imagine, was it not, monsieur ?” he added, turning to Monsieur Theodore.

“ No doubt, no doubt, for those who climbed ; as for me, I slept peacefully most of the afternoon.”

“ That you did, my dear. You were grunting like a pig when we came down again. You have no soul for the picturesque or romantic.”

“ No, that is true ; nor have you either, Mimi, generally. A good lunch and a siesta are more in your line than scrambling over jagged rocks.”

“ That is only because I adapt myself to your taste, my dear. At heart I am as fond of an adventure as Monsieur François.”

Again Madame le Mire glanced at the natural history student. There was a merry twinkle in her eyes.

From this evening until the Englishman left for England the three were inseparable companions, and it was remarked by the rest of the party that the Englishman’s French improved rapidly.

The promenades on the sea were constant, and were never monotonous, for there are round Roscoff so many islands that one never need go over the same ground unless one likes.

After the Englishman left, a lively discussion took place between Madame le Mire and the natural history student.

"No, madame, I repeat it, he was not dangerous. Our amiable young friend was, as I have already said, *trop coquelin* to be that. He was incapable of improving a situation."

"*Mon ami*, you do not know. You assume that all depends on the man. Believe me, my friend, a woman also counts for something: she can initiate if she cannot always act."

"That may be; but even then one must know how to profit by the opportunity. Few mistakes pique so much as a slighted advance."

"And you think the Englishman missed his chance?"

"I know he did."

"How so?"

"Because Monsieur Theodore was not jealous."

"Bah! what a reason! Really, my friend, you are more stupid than I should have thought. That proves nothing, except that madame is like most of her sex, or else that monsieur is too easy-going to be suspicious. *Allez!* You must find a better reason than that."

As, however, no better reason was forthcoming, the question remained undecided, in spite of Madame le Mire's firm conviction in her own sound judgment.

For, after all, was not the lady French?—was not the husband dull?—was any opportunity wanting which could be improved? Thinking over all this, madame naturally formed her own conclusions, for do we not all judge others a good deal by ourselves?

But, in spite of all this, perhaps the student of molluscs had not studied physics in vain.

Cruise IV.

A Deed of Darkness.

“IT’S going to blow very hard to-night, and what’s more, the wind will be right on shore. That’s my belief.”

“Well, what do you advise my doing then?” I shouted.

“Why, you’d better get away as quickly as you can, and make tracks for Poole,” came back the hoarse reply.

This was cheerful.

I had sailed down from the Solent that afternoon, and as the wind and tide were both ahead, I had put into Swanage Bay to spend the night. There were two other coasters riding at anchor, and we three were the sole occupants of that pretty bay, sheltered from most winds indeed, but not quite so completely as Charles Kingsley says, for when it likes to blow from the E. or S.E., a very nasty sea can tumble home then, as the bay is entirely open to that quarter.

Before turning in, I had gone alongside my nearest neighbour, and as the skipper’s opinion was quite favourable to the prospects of the night, I had gone back, and settled down for a good night’s rest, before making an early start next morning.

I suppose I had slept some hours, but it seemed as if I had only just closed my eyes, when I was roused by much shaking, a constant rattle of everything which could move, and a violent jerking every now and then.

I was still much of a novice at the ways of the sea, for my cruising had only been in land-locked waters, and scarcely ever beyond the Wight. It took me a few minutes to realise what was the matter. A heavy lurch assisted my wits. It was useless to attempt to sleep any longer.

I got up, lighted the lamp, and found it was just one o'clock in the morning.

I looked at the glass. It had gone down a good bit. Then I pushed open the hatch and looked out.

A cold, damp air was blowing. There were no stars visible. Around me everything seemed black. The lights on the pier were shining brightly. Ahead of me were the shadowy shapes of the two "ketches." Their riding lights were tossing and swinging as the heavy vessels rolled or pitched in the sea.

There was a rushing sound all round. It was the sea dashing on the pier and along the shore.

There did not seem much wind, however, only a moaning in the rigging sounded melancholy and foreboding, causing the bright and cosy cabin to look all the more tempting.

I was about to go below when a voice hailed me. It was the skipper of the nearest "ketch."

I gave a responsive shout.

"Is that you, governor?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Well, we've been a talkin' about you, and as it's coming on to blow hard, you'd better clear out o' this. We're goin' to. Only as you be a bit small, and only yerself all

alone aboard, you'd better get away for Poole. That's what you'd better do."

"Thank you; all right," I yelled in reply. But I did not feel nearly so cheerful as my voice seemed to indicate. I had not sailed much at night up to now. Poole was entirely unknown to me. I had only a very small scale chart of the coast from the Owers to Bridport, and this was of ancient date. I had no book of sailing directions, and according to the chart there was not more than four feet at spring tides on the shoalest part of the bar.

I could see the sands uncovered a long way out, and that the actual entrance to the channel began somewhere out in the open sea. All this was very alarming to a beginner.

"The channel would be hard enough to find by daylight," I thought; indeed, I had intended putting into Poole that afternoon, only a glance at the chart had deterred me.

In those days there were no such handy books as have since been published, with coloured charts like pretty picture books, and ample directions to help a nervous Corinthian.

The idea, therefore, of having to grope for this shallow shoal-girt channel in a pitch dark night and rough sea, with the assurance that a gale was going to blow right on shore that very night, was the reverse of agreeable.

It seemed absolutely impossible to find the way. While I was sadly thinking over all this, the same hoarse voice hailed me out of the darkness.

"Yacht ahoy!"

I scrambled on deck. "Hullo!" I shouted.

"You'd best look sharp or you'll miss your tide. Besides, it'll be blowing presently."

The energy of my friendly skipper imparted itself to me. With a regretful sigh I turned down the lamp, put everything as tidy and snug as I could, lighted the side lights, and then went on deck.

How very lively the little boat was! I took down two reefs, reefed the foresail, and changed the jib for the storm one. All this took some time to do in the dark, and with the little ship jumping about in all directions. She was as lively as a parched pea in a frying pan.

It was dark too. Reefing at the best of times is poor sport, but on a dark night, with doubtful work ahead, it becomes very lugubrious.

At last everything was ready. I shortened in the chain, hoisted the mainsail, topping the boom well up, saw the side lights were all right, the jib and forehalyards were clear, and then set to work to get the anchor on board.

When this job was over, it was a hasty pull on the jib halyards, a quick belay, then up with foresail, and the little vessel paid off before the heading wind.

The breeze was right into the bay, and it was a dead turn out.

And now as soon as the sails were set, the wind died away altogether.

It was most exasperating. The boom swung all over the deck. The headsails flapped maddeningly.

Amid this miserable turmoil, again the hoarse-voiced skipper hailed me.

“Yacht ahoy!”

“Hullo!” I shouted.

“Yer—berrer—go—Poole—get—pilot.” This was the sound that reached me. It took a little time to understand.

As far as I could see, however, the difficulty was to get to Poole. If I once accomplished that job I should not want a pilot, it seemed to me.

"All right!" I shouted back. I was becoming a little exasperated. I always am when I don't have my proper night's rest.

It really seemed, too, as if I had been heedlessly turned adrift in the inky waste around. There was no wind as yet; nevertheless the sea kept tumbling home in the bay, and dashing on the shore in a very unaccountable manner.

"I suppose he knows all about it," I commented. "But it certainly looks as if I could have held on until morning anyway."

Seeing that we were being set by the swell rather too near the shore, I tried to go about. It was no good, I could do nothing. There was no wind, and I made up my mind to anchor again.

Just then I heard the "click, click" of the ketch's winch; she was getting up her anchor; I could hear her mainsail swinging and rattling.

I got out the sweep and rowed the boat round. If the others thought it necessary to clear out, surely the matter must be urgent for a small boat like mine—only where was the wind?

As if to answer my question, the mainsail suddenly gave a jerk. The headsails were quiet. A solemn stillness brooded in the darkness, and a chilly breath passed over my cheek. I could imagine myself in a haunted chamber, touched by the clammy hand of a ghostly presence.

It is strange how darkness at sea eliminates the idea of space. The leaping sea, too, seems smaller than it really is.

I shivered involuntarily as I held the tiller. The silence, the darkness, and the tossing water were alike weird.

But the chilly breeze, light as it was, kept the sails filled. I was able to steer, and stood away on the starboard tack, passing close under the stern of the ketch.

"Do 'ee go into Studlands Bay. There's a pilot-boat allus layin' there. You ask for a pilot; one'll come aboard and take 'ee into port," sung out another sympathetic friend.

"Studlands Bay," I said, repeating the words. "I wonder where that is."

However, I could not stand on too long as I was going. I could already see the loom of the high cliffs as they rise from the lower ground to Ballard Down on the east side of Swanage Bay.

As soon as I had gone about, I left the foresail over to windward, and dived below to consult the chart.

"Studlands Bay, let me see. Ah, yes, here it is, just round the corner inside that shallow spit which marks the west side of the Poole Channel. But it looks an awkward place to be cruising about in on a dark night. The whole bay is full of shoals, and the wind is right upon it." Such was the result of my examination.

I went oh deck a little pensively.

The wind had now freshened considerably. The little boat was pounding against a short curling sea. I could see nothing beyond the mast. The crests of the breaking waves rose out of the darkness, suddenly splashed into sight, pale and livid as the green light fell across them, and either broke in showers of spray, or seethed along the gunwale and waterways.

I could feel the sea was growing nastier every minute as the little boat jumped into the steep ridges.

After sailing as long as I thought right on this tack I again went about, hoping to weather the chalky headland known to all trippers from Bournemouth to Weymouth and Swanage by the remarkable isolated pinnacle of chalk which goes by the name of "Old Harry." I could not see the land at all, nor any light. The wind had increased very much. There was a considerable sea running, I could feel, and I heartily thanked my friend the skipper for having given me such good advice. With the reefs I had down I did not fear any weather. My only anxieties were about the shore. After sailing, as I thought, long enough, I luffed and peered under the sail into the darkness.

It was lucky I did.

A big black wall seemed towering above me. I instantly put down the helm, and the little vessel came round like a top, to stand off on the other tack.

I could just make out an isolated pinnacle, and I recognised the strange rock which had attracted my attention in the afternoon. It was "Old Harry" himself, and I had only to make one short board out before rounding the point, after which it would be all easy sailing, with the wind coming more and more abaft as I turned round to run into Studlands Bay.

It was very dark. I had already lost sight of the land before I went about, and I did not see it again until my adventures were nearly over.

The weather was evidently changing for the worse. The breeze was piping up, and with the wind came the rain. For a time it blew quite hard, and the heavy driving rain made the blackness still more black.

I was sailing very fast—faster than I cared about, seeing how limited was the space ahead of me.

Surely I must be in Studlands Bay. If so, the pilot vessel might be quite close. I could not see a boat's length off, and it seemed preposterous to look for a vessel under such conditions.

As I was sailing fast, with a rapidly rising and following sea, in very doubtful waters, I thought no time was to be lost.

I began to yell, "Pilot ahoy! Pi—lot a—hoy—oy—oy!"

At last, what with futility of yelling, and anxiety about my position, I thought it better to luff up and come head to wind. This would give me time to consult the chart a bit. As the little boat broached to and came up to the wind, I felt how very much stronger the breeze was than it had seemed while running before it. The fleeting glimpse, too, I obtained of the tall crests of the waves as they tumbled past the glimmering of the side lights, showed how the sea had got up. When the vessel was fairly head to wind I took a careful look round.

It was still raining hard. I could see nothing ahead. I peered under the sail to leeward: nothing there. Then I turned round and carefully searched the weather side. I had hardly taken a glance when I saw a light. How far off it was, or whether it was on a vessel or not, I could not say. My own little craft was jumping about so wildly that this would fully account for any unsteadiness in the appearance of the light.

After watching it very carefully, I came to the conclusion it was the riding light of some vessel, and could not be far off.

In order to make sure, I eased off the foresheet, and let the boat come round on the other tack. Then I surged cautiously towards the strange light.

"Pilot ahoy! Pi—lot a—hoy!" I yelled afresh. Then I knew why it is that sailor men always speak in gruff tones. I found my own voice getting quite the right thing.

"'Ullo! What d'yer want?" came back a much gruffer reply.

Then I made out something blacker than the night behind the small lantern, the light which had attracted me.

"I want a pilot to take me into Poole."

"'Ow much d'yer draw?"

"Four feet six," I yelled.

"Then I ain't a'comin' wi' yer. Keep the lights in one and go in."

"Where are the lights?"

"Go on. You'll see 'em."

"But where's the pilot boat?"

"Why 'ere! *This* is the pilot boat! she's on her moorin's. All the rest is gone away wi' craft. I wouldn't come wi' you not for eight pound."

As I had not the slightest intention of offering him a quarter of this sum (though why he fixed eight pounds as an insufficient temptation I did not stop to inquire), I let the boat come round again, and stood away in the blackness to look for more lights.

I felt like a kind of moth searching for brilliancy. Whether the result would be as fatal to me as to the moth, was a doubtful point.

One more good and careful look at the chart. How snug and warm it was down in the cabin! I had a great mind to lie-to all the rest of the night, and go to sleep down below. In those days I was young and rash. It

seemed to me a much wiser thing to find my way into Poole and then sleep in safety rather than lie-to in the pitch dark off a lee-shore waiting for dawn.

After a little refreshment, and a long and thoughtful examination of the chart, I went on deck again. It was evident I should have to sail very close to the wind in order to weather the outer edge of the sand spit on the W. side of the channel. So away I sailed in the wild sea and black night, with the spray and rain beating into my face, until at last I thought I saw a light on the lee-bow. It was a very faint and feeble glimmer, not at all like the light from a lighthouse.

My experience hitherto had been limited. I expected lighthouses to harbours to be big things—at the very least stone towers giving a splendid and dazzling light like that of the Foreland or the Eddystone. However, this was the only light I could see, and it certainly was in the right direction.

But I was told to keep two lights in one before I attempted to run through the channel. As yet I only saw one.

Then it occurred to me I might be too far out, so I eased off the sheet a bit and sailed more free.

The sea seemed very lumpy. I could hear it breaking and roaring all round me.

I was carefully watching the light, when suddenly, to my great joy, another faint twinkle appeared a little to the N. W. of it. This light, too, was higher than the other, and I had no doubt these were the twin stars to guide me into safety.

I held on steadily, however, until the lights were quite in line. Then I bore up and found myself running almost dead before the wind.

How difficult it was steering ! I tried to prevent a gybe and yet keep the lights in one. If I felt a wave and handled it, then the lights came apart, and I knew I was in danger of running on a bank. If I kept exactly on the lights, then the boom rose, or the sheet became slack, and I ducked my head to ward the threatening blow.

It was very anxious work.

I could hear the sea thundering on the shoals on each side of me. I knew ruin was within an oar's length either way. I could see nothing, only the friendly specks of light which would not keep in line, do what I would.

The sea thundered behind, it roared on each side, I could see nothing. Could I not ? What, then, is that black thing close to me, seen for a moment in the gleam of the port light ?

It is a buoy ; there is another. I luffed a little to keep more away from the edge of the west sand.

The sea was tumbling against the ebb, for Poole Harbour was draining seawards now. Fast as I was running, the lights did not seem much brighter or any larger. I kept them as steadily as I could exactly in a line. The sea was growing quieter. Evidently I must have entered the channel for some time, and the banks no doubt were uncovering on each side. The dull roaring, or more alarming crash as a nearer wave toppled over into shoal water, was dying away. Clearly I must be getting close to the land.

Then a thought struck me. The lights must be on the shore somewhere. If I kept them in a line always there must come a moment when I should run against them, or on shore first.

This was obvious and disconcerting.

I peered more anxiously than ever under the sail.

I could see nothing. If only I could have told how far I was off the shore, I should not have minded; but I had no means of judging. I felt sure I could not be very far away.

At last I saw a vague black line. It stretched all along ahead. I could see no opening. The lights stood on the centre of this obscurity.

There was no doubt if I went on I should be ashore. I looked around. I could see nothing. Only one thing was comforting, the sea was very much quieter.

Why shouldn't I anchor? Happy thought. I ran forward, lowered the foresail, and then running aft brought the boat head to wind. Then I anchored. The jib was got in, and I found I was riding easily head to wind, and apparently to tide too; at least the boat did not sheer about at all. However, I was not satisfied; I could not really be inside the harbour, or I should have seen a little more clearly the dark outline of the land.

I resolved to get into the dinghy and explore.

After pulling a few strokes, I lost sight of the *Undine*. In a few more I found I had black objects on each side of me. I had already lost sight of the lights.

Presently I found the black lines were closing in astern, and then I knew I must be through some opening or other.

I turned round, intending to go back to the yacht and bring her in. I had hardly pulled three strokes when I found I was aground.

Beside me was a ragged sort of black line sticking up. I looked over the side and saw there was land of some kind close to me. Pushing the boat up, I got out and examined the place. All I could see was a low beach. Beyond loomed up some building, as I thought. I walked towards it.

As I did so I caught sight of something moving.

"'Ullo, Tom, be that you?" a gruff voice said.

"No, I've come ashore to find out a berth for my cutter," I replied.

"Eh! who be you? I thought it wur Tom."

I politely regretted that the shaggy shadow should have been so far misled in his ideas, and repeated that I wanted to find a good berth for my little yacht. Either my new acquaintance was deaf or very dull of comprehension, for it took much repetition to make him understand.

At last matters dawned upon him. He growled out:

"If so, then, where's the vessel?" in rather an injured tone. He evidently took it amiss that I was not Tom.

"Oh, she's over there," I replied vaguely; for I really had not much idea where she was now I had come ashore.

"What, on the Pole sand? Then you won't see much more of her after to-night; that I can tell 'ee."

Evidently I had made a mistake in my direction.

"There was plenty of water round her when I left her," I said. "What I want to know is, where I can put her in safety."

"Why, come inside, to be sure. What do 'ee want to leave her out there for?"

I did not want to leave her out there at all. It was exactly my idea, too, to come inside.

"Well, will you come and pilot me up?" I suggested.

"No, that I can't. I'm awaitin' for Tom."

"Is this Tom?" I asked, noticing a dim figure emerging out of the blackness.

"Tom, be that you?"

"No, Mister Budden, it's me," replied a deep voice.

"Oh, it's you, be it? You ain't seen Tom nowhere, have 'ee?"

"Not since he went aboard that timber vessel as went up on the flood."

"Ah, then, he ain't come down yet, I suppose."

During this dialogue, I was growing a little impatient. Perhaps the new-comer could help me to find a berth. From the tone of his voice I judged he was a seaman, but he spoke as if he associated with gentlemen.

"I wonder if——" I began, when I was interrupted by a grating noise. It was a boat running on the beach.

"That's Tom, I'll lay," said the deep-voiced speaker.

"Tom, be that you?"

"All right, old 'un. What's up?" called back a cheery voice.

"Aye, aye. That's Tom right enough," said my first acquaintance.

Now I thought was my chance. I began again :

"I say, can you tell me where I'm to find anyone who will take me into a safe berth?"

"Yes, mister, I can," promptly replied another black silhouette, who had apparently stepped out of the sea.

"Thank you. Can you come with me?"

"Yes, I will. Where's the craft?"

"Oh, out there somewhere," I replied vaguely.

"All right. Where's your punt?"

I showed him, the other two figures accompanying us and saying nothing.

"No, no; I ain't agoin' in her," said my new ally, after taking a cursory glance at my dinghy.

"Why not?" I asked.

"Too small. You come in mine. The old 'un he'll look after your'n."

But this idea did not meet my approval. I am not naturally of a suspicious nature, but I could not tell who these dim figures were. All seemed so strange, turning up as these men did out of the darkness on this low shingly spit, apparently miles from any human habitation.

Always of an imaginative turn, my natural bent had been fostered by much reading of many blood-curdling tales. Smugglers, pirates, conspirators, bandits, slavers, savages, cannibals, such had been the companions of my youthful wanderings in the thrilling pages of fiction.

Could any situation be more suggestive than that in which I now found myself?

Ashore on a lonely sandbank, not a sign of a dwelling, unless indeed that black excrescence was a house. Three figures mysteriously turning up in the inky darkness. Could Tom Ingoldsby have described them more accurately when he told how

“Hand in hand the murderers stand,
By one, by two, by three!”

Then why did Tom decline coming in my boat? Why did he suggest his? Everything was possible. I resolved to hurry away as soon as I could.

“No, I will go off in my boat. You can follow, or wait here and shout to me as I come in,” I said firmly.

“All right, mate,” answered Tom, in an indifferent tone. “Please yourself.”

I pushed my boat down and was just getting in, when the deep-voiced shadow came up.

Was the struggle going to begin? I thought of what the heroes of my favourite books would have done. They always took the initiative. They would knock this man down, jump on him, rush at the other two, and in a jiffy

would rout the enemy. Then they would be touched at the result of their prowess, would kneel by the side of the prostrate victims, staunch their life blood with a scented and laced pocket-handkerchief, the gift of a dark Spanish beauty, until, lost in this act of humanity to surrounding circumstances, they would be unaware of the approach—

But my thoughts were interrupted.

"What's the name of your craft, and where do she come from?" broke in the deep voice of the shaggy figure, stepping up to me. He spoke sternly—evidently this was the critical moment.

"Why do you want to know?" I replied defiantly. I could see the other figures creeping up under cover of the darkness. No time was to be lost. I shoved off the boat and jumped in.

"Look here. This won't do. I'm the coastguard here. What's the name of your vessel, if you've got one?"

This was crushing.

I have the greatest respect for authority, and would on no account violate the slightest letter of the law.

"The *Undine*," I called out, "from Swanage."

"What's your cargo?"

"I haven't got any. She's a yacht."

"Oh, all right. But you'd best let Tom bring her in; you'll be sure to get ashore else."

This put me on my metal. I felt quite brave now; besides it had stopped raining, although still very dark and blowing right on shore. However, I felt the worst was over, and rowed away into the obscurity to find the yacht.

I had absolutely nothing to guide me. I had left the side lights burning, and had not put up any anchor light as I

ought to have done, but I expected to be away such a little time that I did not think this was necessary.

After rowing vaguely about, getting ashore twice and becoming very exasperated and anxious lest anything should have happened in my absence, I caught sight of some object near me.

This turned out to be a buoy, and I knew I must be near the fairway anyhow.

I rowed on steadily for a few minutes. Then I paused and looked about. No signs of the *Undine*.

This was really becoming alarming. Could Tom have overhauled me and seized her as a derelict?

I began to row in an undecided way towards the east side of the channel, when to my great relief I saw a loom of some object.

I moved towards it. It was the *Undine* right enough. Her lights had gone out, but she was otherwise all right. With much joy I clambered on board and looked down into the cabin. How snug it looked! I felt strongly tempted to turn in and leave all further navigation until daylight.

I looked round. The sea I could hear tumbling and roaring on the banks outside and on each side. The two leading lights were steadily watching me. Along the East there was a faint pallor.

I saw the outline of the land quite plainly. It would be better to finish off the sail and turn in for a good solid snooze when all risk was over. Once more that night I shortened up the chain, hoisted the dripping sails, broke the anchor out, and ran in cautiously, edging away from the lights as I judged necessary.

"Be that you, master?" a voice hailed. It was the voice of Tom.

"Yes," I shouted, glad to have some guide to the now quite unlighted channel.

"Keep over this way—that's it. Here, luff a bit—that'll do," and Tom emerged from the blackness as he scrambled on board, holding his painter in his hands.

"That's it, keep her so—now, is all ready forward? Well, you go and lower the sails while I takes the helm. You knows where the gear's made fast. I knows where the channel is. See?"

Much as I dislike leaving the helm to anyone else, the philosophy of this remark was obvious.

As I stood up in the boat, I saw the black low land on each side. It was but a shadow as yet. Immediately ahead was what I took for a high bank. We were running in fast.

"Down foresail!" called out Tom.

Abeam was a shadowy pole. We luffed round this.

"In with the jib!" But this was a needless order, as I had not hoisted it.

In another minute Tom called out: "Let go the anchor!" and away rattled anchor and chain.

Then it was "Down mainsail!" and by the time all was snugly stowed the pallor of a sickly dawn had grown over the wintry sky.

"You're all right now," said Tom.

I looked round. The dark shadow which I had taken for a high bank now became a steep island with fir trees growing thickly up its sides. Above their tops a tower projected. Beyond it the land fell away to a broad belt of water, and on the other side high land again rose up.

Beside me was a long beachy spit; on this was the black erection I had taken for a building. It was a hulk

drawn up on shore, where it served for a coastguard barrack.

I could not see any entrance by which I had come in.

The result of my survey was that it did not seem possible to find a snigger berth.

So Tom and I parted, both to have as long a snooze as possible after a good night's work.

The noise of the rain pattering on the deck and the moaning of the wind in the rigging helped me quickly to sleep, to which happy state the feeling of thankfulness that there was no more groping in the dark for safety also contributed no little. These were the last sounds I heard.

* * * * *

"Yacht ahoy!"

I woke up suddenly. Someone was tapping on the deck.

Sleepily I looked out. It was broad daylight.

"What is it?" I growled.

"Is yours the little craft what belongs to the gent as came in from Swanage last night?"

"Yes. What's the matter?"

"Nothin', only you didn't tell me your name."

Then I recognised the deep voice of the shadowy "smuggler" of the night before. It appeared to belong to a good-looking coastguard.

I told him what he wanted to know, and was about to dive below to finish out my snooze, when I noticed a steam launch crossing from the island to the sandy spit which forms the east side of the narrow entrance to Poole Harbour.

"That's the launch of Mr. C——h B——k," said the

coastguard. "His father owns all Branksea. He's going over to our station, I'm thinking."

Whereupon the coastguard shoved off, and I was left to think what was to be done next.

This did not take long to decide. It was past 11 o'clock; clearly it was time to get up. So I lighted the stove and then went overboard.

It was yet early in April; the plunge, therefore, was a short one.

I had scarcely scrambled on deck again when I was aware of the steam launch bearing down on me. I hastened to complete my toilet below.

"Yacht ahoy!"

How most inconsiderate! Surely they must have seen **my** situation.

"Yacht ahoy!"

"Well, really I think they might allow a fellow to dress!" I gasped as I hurried on a necessary garment. It is **difficult** to get one's damp limbs into the cases tailors **provide** for them, especially when one is in a hurry!

"Yacht ahoy!"

"Yes! yes! What is it?" and I put out my dishevelled head, girt round the neck with a bath towel.

"Oh, I see, I'm a little too soon. I beg your pardon, but as I heard from the coastguard that you had had rather a rough night I thought I'd see if I could do anything for you. I live on Branksea Island. I'm going back there now. If you'd like to lunch with me I should be pleased."

"Thank you very much," I said as politely as I could; but how the deuce is a man to be ceremonious with only a bath-towel round his neck? "Won't you come on board? I shall be dressed directly."

"Well, thank you, I have to be back immediately, as the launch is wanted. I see you have a dinghy; you'll find me near those steps," pointing to a landing-place just below some gardens.

"Thank you I'll follow as quickly as I can." Whereupon the launch sheered off, and I was left to dress in peace.

"That's certainly very civil," I thought. "After all, a night adventure single-handed has its advantages."

And it undoubtedly had.

Not only is Branksea, or Brownsea, Island most interesting as well as pretty, but the art treasures collected by the owner are curious. To find an Italian well-top, of the days of Savonarola, or perhaps even of Giotto, suddenly turning up in a glade on the side of a pine-clad hill, amid a sea of bracken and girdled with rhododendron, is an unexpected discovery.

The little church, too, is of beautiful design and most lavish adornment. It stands in a perfect situation on a knoll under pine trees, overlooking a piece of common, with the land-locked water beyond, separated by a ragged heap of wind-blown sand hills from the blue sea outside. The whole effect is charming. Inside the church the oak paneling is excellent and in perfect taste, as indeed are all the details of this lovely little shrine.

It is just such a forest sanctuary as the Knights of the Round Table might have lighted on in their perilous quests. Here Launcelot might throw himself off his steed before he entered to kneel at the altar to pray for Guinevere and himself. Here Galahad or Sir Percival might come to breathe forth orisons of mystic fervour.

It is an enchanting spot, this little churchyard under the whispering fir trees, where the squirrels leap from bough to

bough, or play hide and seek behind the gnarled boles of the deep red trunks.

The old castle, too, a mixture of styles, half genuine, half gimcrack, like a "Gothic" tale of Mrs. Radcliffe, or the Castle of Otranto, is quite romantic.

Once a stronghold, such as Henry VIII. built all along the south coasts when the French fleet was threatening the Isle of Wight, the oldest part of the castle was at its best in the days of Elizabeth. Years afterwards an enterprising gentleman, of the Montague Tigg description, promoted a joint stock company, but before he signally failed, he took the old castle in hand, and made extensive alterations and restorations, transforming the sixteenth century blockhouse into some such fanciful fortalice as the weird castle of Udolpho, which as much resembles a mediæval stronghold as Jack Straw's Castle does a fortress of the first Edward.

As a result of that dark night's adventure, I spent three very pleasant days at Brownsea, where in the neighbourhood of such a southern Margate as Bournemouth it was a delightful surprise to find an island almost Monte Cristo-like in independence and resources.

Single-handed sailing is not always the melancholy business people suppose it to be.

There are a multitude of possibilities in its conditions which might not occur to the ordinary mind. But this is a subject I will refrain from dilating upon, lest the sport become overdone, and the opportunities be thereby lessened.

The joys of a vagabond, combined with the diversions of a sea rover, and both imbued with the romance of not too risky adventure, are experiences not to be sneered at even by the most correct of middle-class personages.



Cruise V.

PART I.

A Wet Sheet and a
Flowing Sea.

“WELL, I’ve ’eard talk of such things, and read on ’em, too, but blest if I ever believed ’em. Lor’ love yer, ’taint likely! And you stands there and acshally goes for to say you come across from Cowes all alone in that there craft? Well! well! in course I sees ye come in, and yer looks as if you’d ’ad a night of it, and you’re too big to stow easily on a steamer, so I suppose yer really did do it. But if yer did, where’s the fun?”

So spake the mate of a steam yacht lying in the Bassin du Roi, or outer basin, in Havre Harbour.

His own vessel had been lying in this same smelly receptacle of all the filth the town could spare from polluting other like receptacles for some days. It was too rough outside to try any more experiments with her screw, at least so the crew thought, and the skipper appeared to agree with the crew—a not unusual circumstance, by

the way, with most yacht skippers. But perhaps, after all, the crew and skipper were both correct in their estimate of the weather this time.

It had been blowing somewhat freshly from the NNE. for the previous two or three days. The sea was leaping against the outer pierheads, and tumbling along the horizon beyond Cape de la Heve in foaming crests. It would have been a little rough knocking about outside. The poor fellows would have got wet and suffered discomfort while trying to eat the many meals such gallant tars require to support their fragile forms. So on the whole they were doubtless right not to run the risk, and the mate was only expressing the sensible point of view when he wound up his half-declared scepticism by the request to know where was the fun in coming across the Channel in such circumstances.

To an enthusiast full of the joy of having accomplished a spanking cruise, and triumphant at having found his way utterly unaided, and for the first time, across Channel for some hundred miles without a hitch, it is crushing to find how his feat is regarded in anything but an heroic light; that, on the contrary, he is looked upon as little more, or less, than a lunatic. The professional seaman and the amateur regard sailing adventures from so totally different a point of view, that the former has only a barely concealed contempt for the latter, very often merging into absolute dislike. This feeling is the product of various circumstances. Chief among these is the suspicion that if amateur cruising becomes very general, there will be the less need for the professional yachtsman; and secondly comes the idea usually prevalent among all kinds of working men, that the

amateur who does his own work is by no means a gentleman.

For the enthusiast, therefore, to be met, after an exciting run, single-handed, from Cowes to Havre, by the question of "Where's the fun?" is a disconcerting and cold-water kind of greeting, all the more chilling from the

obvious impossibility of demonstrating where the fun really does lie.

"Well, you didn't come over 'ere for nothin', I'll lay a wager; so if yer wants to know where good liquor's to be got, I can show yer as well as any in Harver. That I can."

Even this turn to the conversation did not cause any lively satisfaction to the ardent amateur. As, however, he saw the light in which his

night's voyage was regarded, and as his little vessel would be obliged to lie alongside the yacht to which she was already moored, he judged it better to conceal the fact that he was practically a teetotaler. All the other berths were occupied, and the only access to the town was over the



deck of the steamer and the decks of four other yachts moored in between her and the quay. Such being the case, it would be better to dissemble, and assume a sociability which might disguise the truth, since to be habitually abstemious is to be an object of still further contempt to the typical British seaman, especially to the type who was his nearest neighbour.

With a certain uncomfortable sense, therefore, that he was playing the sy-cophant, the newcomer temporised a little as he considered the drift of his neighbour's offer. After all, it might be worth securing the favour of one who could be useful in keeping an eye on his little boat while he himself went ashore.

With a guile, therefore, which surprised himself, he agreed to the mate's proposal, and the two clambered across the decks of the other craft and were soon standing on the town quay.

How delightful is that sensation when first the novice finds himself standing on foreign soil after a voyage in



which he has been the sole navigator, accomplished by means which he himself has alone directed, and after entering successfully a strange port without any assistance whatever from native or professional sources !

This feeling, like all early sensations of pleasure, naturally wears off, but none the less it is very delightful at the moment, and one to be looked back to afterwards as a landmark in the satisfactions of a life.

"Well, ain't yer comin' to see my friend wot sells the bloomin' liquor?"

This question effectually precluded further pleasant speculation. The language, the thoughts, the appearance of the speaker were alike antagonistic to the sensitiveness of an enthusiast.

So, mentally shrivelling up, like the modest woodlouse before the too pressing attentions of the rasping rake, the owner of the small craft went off with the matter-of-fact mate down the narrow streets which lead from the Bassin du Roi to the quai where the Southampton Mail Boats berth. While this ill-matched pair are strolling along there will be time to tell the adventures of the passage from Cowes to Havre.

At four in the afternoon of the day before, the *Undine*, a small cutter of barely five tons, her length on the water-line being only twenty-three feet, her beam nine feet, and her extreme draft scarcely four feet three inches, slipped her moorings off East Cowes, and under all the sail she could carry stood out to catch the East-going tide off Old Castle Point.

There was a nice little breeze from the NE., so with a short leg and a long one, Ryde was easily passed, and the sheets were eased off as Sea View came up on the beam.

Bembridge and *Under Tyne* were soon reached. The Foreland was shortening visibly. There comes Culvercliff, beyond it is the low snout of Dunnose looming grey and grand as it rises to the lofty Down of St. Boniface, and the little craft is rising and falling in the bubble and turmoil of the tide-rips off Bembridge Ledge, heading bravely for the open sea and the distant land of France.

There was only one man in the little speck which was every minute increasing its distance from the low spit of shingly shore which forms the most easterly point of the Isle of Wight.

The evening was drawing on. A haze had hung all day over the downs behind Portsmouth. Selsea Bill was quite invisible. The breeze, which had been keen in the early part of the afternoon, blew fitfully. Its strength was barely sufficient to keep the boom from taking command of the deck.

As the sun went down, red and angry, behind the shadowy horizon, a fresher air came eagerly behind. The sheets all stretched, and grew rigid to their work, while the gaff topsail was doing all it could to hurry ahead of its support.

How very impatient a topsail appears when a breeze pipes up behind—such music is a giddy topsail's delight, as much as ever is the scraping of the fiddles to a blooming *débutante*. As the sun set so the breeze rose, and as it rose so rose the sea, until the solitary cruiser saw that unless he took in the topsail, the topsail would take off the mast. Such an elopement was to be prevented at all hazards. How petulantly the wanton flutters down! What care it needs to prevent her from going overboard! At last the giddy thing is stowed, immured like any other wilful

beauty whose story still lives in Greek mythology or old Italian page.

Then follows the battle with the big jib. This ended, the lights have to be lit before the lonely amateur can take the helm again to follow the pathless course.

Meanwhile the little boat is lying to, and it is plainly evident that the sea has decidedly risen, and the wind is blowing as if it meant to make still greater hubbub.

But the yacht is snug enough for the present with peak eased off, and head sails flat, or flapping. She is once more turned before the waves, and the skipper scans the stars to see if he can save his eyes and the effort to decipher the compass card as it wobbles in the bubbly spirit.

"And if yer did, where's the fun?"

How can one expect such a man as put this scoffing question to see any fun in such a voyage?

Alone, absolutely alone, in the midst of the Channel, about forty miles from either shore. A fresh NE. breeze buffeting the E. going tide and driving the waves before its flouting energy. Only a foot and a half above the water, when on a level keel, the little cutter as she rolls before the following seas is often nearly gunwale under as the sheet rises taut and dripping, while she lurches heavily to windward, or sweeps the sea with her boom as she rolls to leeward.

But is there no fun? Is there no excitement? Let those answer who have tried such a trip, or those who, never—having yet attempted such an experience, are burning with the ardour to go and do likewise. Is there no fun in steering a handy little boat before a rollicking breeze? Is there no excitement in feeling the stern rise, in seeing the bow—
rus forwards as the giddy boat is lifted up an


carried along at racing speed, while the tall sea hurtles before the blast, until, o'erleaping itself as all things must when pride is too puffed up, it topples over in a cataract of foam, frothing to the top of the stem and rushing ahead in a seething mass of creamy spray?

Is there no fun in boldly leaving the well-known shores and flying across the sea to find an unknown land? A parody on Columbus, if you will, but inspired with just the same prying ardour.

Is there no pride in feeling you are accomplishing yourself, without any assistance whatever from professional sources, what scarcely any of the vast mass of the public can do except with the aid of many skilled hands and much expense?

If there is no fun in toil and personal risk, where is the pleasure of mountain climbing, where are the delights of football, or hunting, or in fact of any of our manifold national pastimes? Are these sports only interesting where betting is involved?—where money can be easily lost and far less easily won?—where opportunities for a delirious debauch are unlimited?

To the class to which the mate belonged, such perhaps is the only idea of sport. To such natures there can be no possibility of explaining wherein lies the fun; nor is this to be regarded necessarily as a fault, for fun chiefly consists in relaxation of some kind. To a man whose life is spent in physical labour, fun can only be found in an opposite direction, from which fact may be deduced a wholesome moral, and that is that people should leave others alone, and avoid criticisms when they are ignorant of facts, and even then, too, unless they can put themselves in the other's place.



But how a man does moralise as he sits feeling the helm of his little ship, with an occasional glance at the binnacle and a more constant look ahead !

Surely the sea should foster pure tastes—tastes which only the beautiful and noble can satisfy. Such truly ought to be the fact ; yet who does not recall the sailor's ideas of enjoyment :—

“ And what, my good man, would you choose if you had three wishes given you to gratify ? ”

“ I'm blest if I knows. Well, all the baccy in the world for one, lots of nice gals for another, and no end o' rum. That would about do, that would.”

“ And supposing you had a fourth wish. What would it be ? ”

“ More rum ! ”

But by this time the sea is becoming really steep. As midnight is passed a chilly blast sweeps over the tumbling waves astern. Misty patches scud across the stars. The little boat, only twenty-three feet long on the water-line, staggers forward before the ever pushing sea, as the hurtling masses thump and bluster behind.

It is now near dawn. No light has yet been seen since the last of the long line of steamers was passed, some ten miles out from the Wight, or since St. Catherine's brilliant glow had sunk beneath the horizon.

But the skipper is gazing steadfastly ahead. Surely he sees something.

There is a whitish loom away in the south. By now he ought to be something less than thirty miles off Cap de la Heve. There is no longer any doubt : the light is the twin brilliancy of the *phares* on that bold headland.

Gradually the pale light of dawn creeps over the sea ; the breeze is fresher than ever, but, all the better for a quick run.

In another two hours the little ship is staggering past the high land ending in Cap Antifer to the NE. and Cap de la Heve to the SW.

An English brig, deeply laden, is wallowing in the confused sea caused by the strong ebb of the Seine hurtling over the miles of shoals. Surely no river is more treacherously encumbered than the Seine, unless perhaps it is the Thames, but at least our river has navigable channels, well marked, and wide as well as fairly deep ; but the Seine nearly all runs away, only, however, to rush back again in furious haste, sweeping over the banks and along the shores with dangerous violence, not relaxing its fury until it booms along the Quays of Rouen, finally to dash against the lock gates some twelve miles further up.

As the little yacht rollicked past the brig, it was easy to see how big the seas were, and the owner noted with pride how well his craft was doing her work.

In another half-hour the sails were being stowed, the anchor was down, and the little ship was rolling in the swell as it tumbled along the shore from Cap de la Heve to Ste. Adresse.

A French fisherman came off to proffer help, and to take the skipper ashore, thinking the latter had no dinghy. His surprise, therefore, was great when he saw a strange machine evolved from down below.

A Berthon boat was quite a novelty, and the one being then unfolded was the very smallest of the collapsible tribe.

"And the *patron* is going ashore in that?" exclaimed the Frenchman in horror.

"You are right, my friend," replied the solitary skipper, "and not only am I going ashore, but my luggage too."

Then followed sundry articles of kit, and the skipper himself, until the little Berthon boat looked somewhat like a costermonger's barrow on its way back from Covent Garden Market, only the donkey was wanting. Possibly had the Frenchman been asked, he would have replied that he had not noticed the omission.

"What silly fools these English are to risk their lives in this mad way!" was the honest Pierre's comment; being after all only another form of the jeer of the mate as he asked where the fun lay. The collapsible, however, did its work well, and skipper and kit all landed safely on the steep beach under Frascati's *établissement*.

Later on, however, as the wind freshened considerably, it became quite clear there was no safety in remaining outside Havre Harbour.

By the time Jack-all-Alone came down to the beach, he found it was as much as he could do to get on board again. Indeed, quite a little crowd collected to see this mad Englishman meet the due reward of his folly, in the shape of a good drenching, and much risk of having his canvas boat torn to pieces on the large pebbles.

Luckily, neither of these expectations was gratified. Sail was set, the anchor stowed without any accident, and the *Undine* was soon lost sight of round the outer pier-head.

Le Havre is not a nice place for a small yacht; indeed, few tidal harbours are. For Corinthian yachtsmen, who like Ramsgate, Dover, or Penzance, Havre is not quite so objectionable. Its floating docks are vast, and the accommodation so far as room is concerned is excellent. But—well, perhaps its drains are no worse than English ones would be

if they were discharged alongside the bulwarks of a yacht. It may be insular prejudice which discovers an aroma about a French cascade of stygian filth unequalled in atrocity by anything imaginable by the most inventive or detective of noses.

Perhaps it is only the Bassin du Roi which is so distinguished. The magnificent Bassin du Commerce, to judge by the many fine yachts lying there, may not be so fragrant. Havre, however, whatever may be thought of its other attractions, is not an easy place for a stranger to enter for the first time.

Besides the baffling puffs which are common to all pier harbours surrounded by high houses, there is the additional anxiety caused by the big Trans-Atlantic liners which are always apparently either going in or out at tide-time. The hooting and flurry caused by these huge craft are quite disconcerting enough to those well accustomed to the vagaries of the place, and who know where to go and go it. To an absolute stranger, quite ignorant of the harbour, they are more than perplexing.

After many short tacks the lonely navigator saw a buoy lying in mid-stream, and, luffing up, made fast to it.

Hardly, however, had he done so when a *douanier* shouted something. The words were incomprehensible, but the gestures were sufficiently clear.

"What a beastly place!" exclaimed the disgusted mariner. "I don't see where I can go. The tide will leave me high and dry if I lie alongside the quay, unless I moor where the steamboats berth. They won't allow that. Well, I'll go out again and run up to Honfleur."

No sooner said than steps were taken to put the resolve into execution. Our Corinthian sailor did not at that time

know anything of docks or such-like refuges. He had hitherto never even seen a dock, at least not to understand the uses of such a shelter properly, and he had a most decided prejudice to being virtually a prisoner unable to start when he liked, or to be at the mercy of more or less surly or dictatorial harbour officials.

The *Undine* had never yet been anchored in other waters than those of Southampton Water or the Solent, and the adjacent creeks, where such abominations as docks are either unnecessary for yachts or unknown.

It was an easy job sailing out of Havre Harbour, and it looked no less easy to sail up to Honfleur. But appearances are proverbially deceitful. It was about half-ebb. The tide was rushing out of the Seine in a furious manner.

As it met the wind the turmoil was bewildering. For a little boat, short on the water-line and beamy, progress was limited, but the motion was unlimited.

The course, too, was dubious. With the rashness of a novice, this reckless navigator had come over without providing himself with proper charts.

Such a piece of carelessness was inexcusable, and would probably soon have resulted in a catastrophe. Fortunately the *Undine* drew but little water; the sandbanks, too, were fast uncovering.

Seeing the difficulty before him and the certainty of running ashore if he persisted in trying to find the channel to Honfleur, the skipper luffed all he could and skirted the low marshy land which lies between the new harbour-works of Havre, the Tancarville Canal, and a little light-house, standing on a point called the Pointe du Hoc, not far from Honfleur on the north bank of the Seine. When fairly abreast of this mark, and seeing there was little use in

sailing any further, the vessel's head was brought to wind, the stay sails were lowered and the anchor dropped.

There did not seem a great rush of tide here; there was fully twelve feet of water under the keel, and it was nearly the last quarter of the ebb.

The wind was off shore, all seemed calm, so there was no reason why the weary skipper should not have a snooze, seeing it was fully twenty hours since he had left Cowes, and there had been plenty to occupy him since then.

Taking a last look round before going below, the panorama which met the eye was certainly attractive, even if it was not quite lively.

Astern was the tumbling sea churning the eddying tide as it hurtled over the shoals. Havre city, with all its masts, spires, and churches, nestled under the high land, which, ending in Cap de la Heve, fronts the Channel as far as Fécamp and Dieppe, but slopes steeply landwards, where the pretty suburb of Ste. Adresse spreads among the dells, or peeps out from the well-kept shrubberies of the many wealthy merchants of this great French seaport, the most important, after Dunkerque, of the French commercial harbours in the Channel.

Between Havre and the Pointe du Hoc stretched a long line of low marsh, behind which rose the graceful spire of Harfleur church, a monument of the English domination and the great struggle of the Hundred Years' War. Off this very point, no doubt, the English fleet anchored when that noble "Imp of fame" Harry Madcap, then become a sobered but most chivalrous king, was besieging this important Norman town, for at that time le Havre did not exist.

A range of hills extended all along the Seine, but at some mile or so inland, until the range ended in the bluff cliffs of

Tancarville, where the hoary ruins of the *château* rose mellow in the afternoon sun above the wooded heights.

Across the river, on its southern bank, the masts of a few vessels loomed up over the low land of Quillebœuf, most treacherous of anchorages, for "the bore" or "mascaret" which runs up the river as the tide comes in has a most unpleasant way of washing over stranded vessels, and only leaving their masts apparent.

From Quillebœuf the low shore shimmered under the slanting rays of the westering sun, until the smoke of Honfleur floated before the northerly breeze, and spread below the higher land behind like a skein of flossy grey silk across a violet screen.

Honfleur itself was merely a darker patch under the shadow of the southern hills, which rose behind Trouville, and shut in all further view of the coast of Calvados, that strangely named shore with its Spanish sound.

"It's all pretty enough, and, what's more, the weather looks settled, so I'll have a good many forty winks before I need to trouble about getting under weigh again."

Whereupon, the crew of the *Undine* ducked down below, whence soon afterwards a rhythmical sound might have told the gulls that they could, if they liked, make free with the deck, or even pry into the fore-castle, from which a savoury smell of steak and onions stewing on the oil-stove rose temptingly fragrant on the keen sea breeze.

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"So monsieur came here *exprès*, then? But, *dame!* it is not a safe locality—not these tides anyway."

"Hullo! I say, where the deuce am I? What's up? Who's that? Confound it! What a beastly list she has

got," and—"Oh, I say, there's everything got adrift—eh What do you say?" So grumbling, but half awake, and with many lurches and much difficulty, the owner of the *Undine* scrambled out of the little cabin.

When he stood up in the cockpit, or "well," outside, he could hardly at once understand his position or recollect for the moment where he was.

The first and most obvious circumstance which forced itself very uncomfortably on his observation was that the little yacht was high and dry on a sandbank, and lying with very bad list the wrong way—that is to say, her bilge was resting on the downward instead of the upward slope of the bank.

All around were pools and similar sandbanks. As to any sign of the sea, the place might have been the Sahara itself were it not for these shallow pools.

The sight was disconcerting in the extreme.

"What an awful way this wretched tide does run out! Why, I had over twelve feet before I turned in, and it was then almost low water," grumbled the disgusted mariner. But, presently catching sight of a man in uniform about twenty yards away, he called out, "Hullo! I say, when does the tide rise? Oh, bother! he's a Frenchman, of course; I must try him in his own tongue. Hi! Je dis—quand—monte—monte—what the deuce is tide?—monte l'eau—yes, of course, 'water,' that'll do. Savez vous quand l'eau monte?"

"Plait-il, monsieur?" replied a dapper little *douanier*, who had waded across the pools and banks to interrogate the stranger.

"Plate eel! What on earth's that? No. Look here—I mean — Voyez ici! Je suis un Anglais. Je venais de

l'Angleterre yesterday. Pourvez vous me dire quand la mer—serait ici encore?"

"Dans une heure, monsieur," and then the *douanier* went on to explain that the tides were unusually low that day, and that at most times there was quite a *metre* of water over the bank where monsieur's *yack* then lay so woefully on her side.

After looking curiously at the lonely Englishman, and satisfying himself there was nothing very dangerous about him or his craft, the custom house officer politely took leave, explaining that the tide was now rising, and that he could not stay longer, or be of any assistance. He added, he hoped no harm would come from the "mascaret," but there was a great risk, especially from the bad way the boat was lying.

"Bother!" thought the Englishman, when he fully realised the situation. "I wonder what I shall have to do if she does get swamped? Swim ashore, I suppose, or launch the Berthon."

However, there was nothing to be done, so he dived below again to tidy up a bit, and mop up the stew, which had been capsized into the oil locker.

Presently a rushing, roaring noise could be distinctly heard. The tide was coming in. Already the banks were covered. The keel was under water; it was rushing and bubbling under the bilge; in a few minutes it was up to the covering boards.

The boat began to thump and work. It was an anxious moment. The sea was over the deck and nearly up to the cabin top coaming. On the starboard side, however, there was fully four feet clear above the water.

Suddenly there came a rush. The "mascaret" was on the

war-path. The whole surface of the water seemed to rise abruptly. Then came a heavy lurch, a violent bump, a quick run ahead, a great jerk of the chain, followed by a terrific wrench at the stem. The cable stretched out like an iron rod. The stern swung furiously round, and the danger was over. The *Undine* was riding easily to the eddying tide.

"Well, that's a comfort, anyway. Now let's have tea."

On coming on deck again after a quiet meal, and order once more being restored down below, it became very evident that there was no shelter for the night, anchored where the little vessel was.

The sun had now set. The lights of Havre were dimly visible ahead. The breeze had freshened again and was blowing almost straight up the Seine. It would be a dead beat back to Havre.

That, however, was the only place where any safe shelter could be counted on. It was far too risky to attempt Honfleur as a total stranger and in the dark. The sails were once more hoisted, the anchor was again weighed and the little boat stood close-hauled towards the dim shore.

After many tacks and a long struggle against the tide, the piers of Havre came open again. The wind was now fair for entering the harbour. But where to lie was just as difficult a question to settle then as it had been in the morning.

Wistfully the weary skipper scanned the quays.

"There's a clear place there. That'll do."

The tide was very high. It was an easy matter to glide alongside the quay. A bight of rope was flung over a

bollard head astern, another was carried ahead and similarly secured. The sails were soon stowed. The *Undine* seemed quite safe for the night.

"It's all right, I suppose," thought the skipper as he turned in to sleep the sleep of the just. It was now an hour after midnight. It had been a long spell from four o'clock the day before.

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"Well, of all beastly places that I ever was in, this beats the lot. I'm blest if the wretched boat isn't aground again."

So growled the aggravated skipper as he picked himself up out of the corner of the cabin floor where he had discovered himself as soon as he was sufficiently awake to take in the situation.

There was no doubt about it.

"Why, I'm yards below the quay! What a deuce of a way the tide does go out. But she's not broken her topmast, that's one blessing, anyway. She might have listed into the quay, and then there would have been a smash. But, hullo! What's all that fleet of fishing boats doing out there?"

There was no doubt the little ship had narrowly escaped doing herself some harm.

It was high water when she was moored alongside the quay at midnight. It was now low water.

The top of the quay, which had been nearly level with the deck of the boat when the skipper turned in, was now some thirty feet or so above his head.

Fortunately, in spite of his ignorance of the place, and a carelessness the result of weariness more than anything

else, the captain of the *Undine* had allowed plenty of slack to his warps, and the little ship had grounded on the hard ledge of gravel at the bottom of the quay, listing outwards with a very steep list. It was miserable, but the position was not dangerous. With the experience of the evening before there was no doubt of the vessel rising with the tide.

Outside the gravelly ledge a row of large, heavy fishing-boats was waiting for the flood tide to land their cargoes of fish.

Their number was being momentarily augmented by the arrival of more clumsy, dirty-looking craft.

"Why ever don't they go further up the harbour?" thought the disturbed Englishman, sleepily and disgustedly watching the crowd close to him.

But it was evident there was no idea of this.

Blue-bloused boys in rough head-gear and heavy boots were sculling ashore or throwing warps to their mates on the top of the quay.

"I say! Look out!" growled the stranger, as one of the heavy warps fell on board his boat.

But no attention whatever was paid to his remonstrance, and gradually it dawned on the luckless man that this was a part of the quay especially reserved for the fishermen. This explained why the space was left so temptingly vacant the night before. All the fishing boats were at sea.

As it was now becoming quite clear that all those heavy, dirty craft intended coming alongside the quay as the tide rose, it was equally evident that this was no place for a small yacht.

It was, however, quite impossible to move yet. The only hope of escape lay in the thought that perhaps the enemy would draw more water than the little intruder, and

thus she would be enabled to steal away before the great, heavy fleet entirely encompassed her.

The skipper went below to perform a hasty but most uncomfortable toilet.

When he scrambled on deck again, the first glance showed no time was to be lost if the little craft was to be saved from total annihilation.

The squeeze of an ice floe would be as friendly as the pressure of that weight of dirt and timber accumulated within a few yards of the quay.

The *Undine* was now nearly afloat; in a few minutes more she would be able to attempt an escape.

But all exit seemed barred. Ahead the big craft were already four or five deep alongside the quay. They were closing in astern in equally formidable array. Abeam they were even thicker.

The fate of the luckless hero of that ghastly story of "The man in the iron shroud" seemed in store for the yacht at any rate.

Fortunately the distracted skipper caught sight of a small trading sloop ahead. It was obvious she was in like straits to himself.

Hailing the *patron* in the best nautical French as it occurred to him, the Englishman offered five francs to the seaman if he would get him out of the mess and berth him in a good place.

The offer was accepted. In a few moments a short, square, sturdy descendant of the ancient Northmen, with a ruddy face, reddish hair, and blue eyes, stepped on board.

He promptly began to speak volubly to a couple of pirates who were about to board the yacht, hauling after them a greasy grass rope thicker almost than the yacht's

mast. This caused them to desist. Whereupon he made signs to another man on the quay to cast off the warps, which fell on the deck with a thud, nearly smashing in the skylight and the skipper's head.

Then began a grim tussle. The bowsprit was run in, the bows were shoved off, and the little boat was wedged stem on between two of the nearest of the fishing boats.

As the crews of these craft were doing all they could to get alongside the quay, the efforts of Guillaume or Richard, for it was doubtful which was the right name of the *patron* of the *Belle Mathilde* of Carentan, were not appreciated by the others.

Shouts, execrations, volubility, and no doubt blasphemy, raged around. After a very hard fight the little *Undine* emerged on the outer edge of the fleet, having gallantly broken the line of the blockading squadron without much damage except to her paint.

Then Guillaume hoisted the foresail while the skipper set the mainsail. It was a dead beat up the harbour, but what of that? Only the question was, where were they going?

The yacht was already abreast of the large buoy from which the *douanier* had warned the skipper the day before; on the left was a narrow gut ending in a bridge. Into this short canal the Frenchman steered. The high houses on each side took off all the wind. He ran the boat alongside the quay, and then explained that at high water the dock gates would be open, when the Englishman could enter. So, after all, the only comfort in Havre lay inside a dock. To his surprise, the skipper found himself actually pleased at the prospect of such an imprisonment.

"Well! Ain't this better than sailin' all alone across that bloomin' Channel?"

So the mate remarked as he drank glass number three of very good *fin champagne*. He was a connoisseur of strong drinks, was the mate. Perhaps it would have been hard to say what other knowledge he possessed, unless it were the knack of bounce. Like many a professional yachtsman, he tried to conceal an absolute aversion to work and a gross ignorance, accompanied by a fair share of cowardliness, by blustering swagger.

The small opinion this individual already possessed of the owner of the little yacht, which had picked up a berth alongside his steam yacht, was not at all modified by discovering that this eccentric person did not drink.

"But 'ee don't mind my drinkin'," he commented; "so 'ere goes, and be 'anged to 'im for a milksop."

Meanwhile, the keeper of the little wine shop, to which the mate had led the way, was extolling the fine collection of wines he had for sale, and, in broken English of a villainous sort, was alternately fulsomely flattering the mate and his companion, or trying to bully the latter into buying an assortment of liquor contained in various flashily labelled bottles.

"See 'ere, Capitaine, dis is a vine it is imposseeble to buy elsewere. My broder is de sole propriétaire of de vinyard 'Is brand is known eververe, is it not, Capitaine?" added the man, turning to the mate, who winked and nodded as he held out his glass to be refilled.

"In coorse! Look 'ere, Captain, you'll do a long sight worse nor layin' in a stock of this gentleman's special lot. 'Is brother is the Count of something or other. Blow me if I can remember their bothering names. But 'e's well known, you bet."

"Ees, ees, dat is true, Capitaine; 'e is de Comte de St. Emilion. Reesh, ah! so reesh, 'e can buy Rothschild if 'e like."

As, however, this sort of thing was utterly repugnant to the owner of the *Undine*—who, having done enough, as it seemed to him, to propitiate the mate, saw no reason why he should continue to be bored—he very shortly took leave of the wine shop, to set out on a ramble through the town. Havre is not a nice place. The chief lions are the fine central dock and the walk to Cap de la Heve. The Theatre and Casino offer the usual attractions of such places: beyond these there is little else to see.

When the single-handed cruiser returned on board he found a man waiting for him.

"You have to pay these dues, Captain. They come altogether to eight francs seventy centimes."

"Why," exclaimed the astonished amateur, "I thought all yachts were free of harbour dues when they belonged to a recognised Royal yacht club. I am a member of the Royal Victoria Yacht Club."

"That is so generally, perhaps; but there are many local dues, and these have to be paid. It is of no consequence now. I will pay them for you, and you can call at my office for the discharge, without which you cannot leave the harbour. There is my card." So saying, the man, who seemed to belong to the better classes, handed to the new-comer some papers and a card, on which was printed: "Monsieur Julius Moser, Yacht and Ship Broker. Agent by appointment to the English Yacht Clubs," with an address below.

Having done this the broker bowed, smiled, and retired.

"How on earth am I to know if this is all right?" growled the Englishman. "The fellow looks like a Jew, and his name certainly does not contradict his appearance. Besides, I thought all officials wore a uniform. How did he get hold of the papers?"

However, the matter did not seem to press, so the bewildered skipper went below to change for the evening.

Life in a dock necessitates one of two things: either one makes a good many enemies or a few friends.

It is impossible to pass over the decks of five vessels several times a day without one or other result.

Fortunately, the last arrival was of an inoffensive disposition, and possessed of a great dislike to annoying others. This tendency served to make friends, and it was not long before he found himself in the cabin of the cutter yacht which was lying on the other side of the steam yacht. The party on board were a little crowded—at least, so it seemed to the solitary mariner.

Besides the owner and his wife, there were three other "governors," and a crew of two men and a boy. Considering the vessel was barely twenty tons register this seemed a good many.

The crew, however, appeared to think that they were very badly off, and that their work was decidedly arduous, in spite of the "governors" doing most of the sailing work, and even a good deal of the cleaning.

Such is the nature of the paid hand, however.

The inside vessel of all was a fine schooner yacht, belonging to some Portuguese grandee hailing from the Azores. She was flying the ensign of the Portuguese Royal Yacht Club, and looked a very smart craft.

All these yachts had been in dock over a week.

"Our skipper says it is far too rough to go outside," said the owner of the much-inhabited cutter yacht. "You know they all say you're quite mad to have come across all alone in such weather, or, in fact, in any weather."

However, in spite of this criticism on his enterprise, the captain of the *Undine* was quite resolved to repeat the experiment. He was soon heartily sick of Havre and the smelly dock.

"I shall go away to-morrow unless it blows dead in my teeth," he remarked to his new acquaintances.

"We want to get away, too. Our holiday is nearly over, but the skipper says we can't go until the wind changes."

"But surely you can make a start if I do?" said the lonely one.

"Well, we should like to, but of course we must be guided by our captain."

Such thraldom is it to be in the power of the paid hand!

The amateur skipper turned in that night with a profound sense of gratitude that nothing had ever yet induced him to ship a crew.

"Let those laugh who like. At least, I keep my money in my pocket and remain my own master, two conditions of life which do not detract from its enjoyment, anyhow, and the only drawbacks are that I am called a lunatic and have plenty to occupy my time."

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PART II.

But now the storm came on apace,
The water wraith was shrieking,
And in the scowl of heaven each face
Grew dark as they were speaking.

NEXT morning, as if to justify the resolve of the night before, the wind had clearly changed.

It is difficult in a town to tell accurately where the wind is blowing from, and Havre lies so well sheltered by the amphitheatre of hills around, that this difficulty is still more increased.

The owner of the cutter, however, had been out to the pier, and he reported the breeze to be light, but blowing from the S. W.

The dock gates would not be open before three unfortunately, and there was plenty of time for the fickle breeze to go back to its old quarter by then.

Chafing at this waste of time, and vowing never again to go into a dock, the solitary sailor made all ready for a start, and then hauled out so as to be as near the lock gates as possible when they did open.

The cutter followed suit. By three the gates were slowly opened, and the *Undine* was once more free. It seemed as if the lonely Englishman's adventure had aroused some interest, for a hearty Frenchman, well dressed and quite enthusiastic, insisted on taking hold of the *Undine's* tow-rope, and hauling her out to the edge of the quay, in spite of the protestations of her owner.

"Non ! non ! laissez moi tranquille ! I also do take promenades on de sea. Ve are camarades : leave me to halle you out. I do like it. Where you go ? Sudhampton ?



"BUT NOW THE STORM CAME ON APACE."

Bon, I also 'ave been to Sudhampton. Fine town. Voila, you may now spread sails. Bon voyage—au revoir—vish you good luck ! ”

By this time the sails were set. The hawser was thrown on board. A parting wave of the hand, a final “bon voyage” from the kindly Frenchman, and away the *Undine* sped to make tracks for England.

It was four o'clock as the harbour pier was rounded. The other cutter was about a quarter of a mile further out. She had got a good start, as, with her large number of hands, there was no necessity to make fast while the sails were being set.

The sea was lumpy, and the breeze very light. The little boat surged heavily in the short sea. It took an hour or more to clear Cap de la Heve, and then the breeze died away altogether.

The sea, however, was as troublesome as ever, and the boom took command of the deck for a time.

Ahead, the other yacht was rolling wildly. These breathless times on the sea, when the water is still agitated, but without any apparent cause, are full of aggravation for the sailor. He knows well enough something is coming, and all he can do is to wait until it comes.

The sky was dull and lowering. In the west, where the sun was sinking behind the gathering gloom, a lurid glow spread over the pall-like canopy of clouds.

Vivid patches of vapour appeared and disappeared, showing that the wind was not far off.

The glass was falling fast.

Astern, the forbidding precipices of Cap de la Heve were shutting in the horizon. The sea was leaping and dashing at their base. Havre had already disappeared.

A French pilot cutter was rolling and pitching helplessly in the tossing sea. She came slowly flopping towards the *Undine*, her bows plunging and rising in the swell.

As the clumsy looking vessel passed, her crew gesticulated to the lonely sailor in his little boat, while the skipper shouted something which, from his gestures and his pointing to the west, seemed as if he was urging the Englishman to put back.

But Havre was worse than a rough night, and after all the wind, when it did come, would most likely be a fair one.

As there was nothing better to be done the skipper went below and had tea; when he came on deck again the weather looked more threatening than ever.

Still there was no wind. Darkness, however, was coming on. The lights of Cap de la Heve were gleaming brilliantly astern. There was no sign of the cutter ahead. The horizon was diminishing rapidly in extent. Lights began to show dimly here and there; steamers and a few fishing or pilot-boats accounted for these. The traffic, however, on the French side of the Channel is very small in comparison with what it is on the English side.

The contrast between the scene when approaching the Thames or the Mersey, and that presented by the estuaries of the Seine and the Loire, is very striking.

If a thoughtful stranger were to think over the matter he would surely see that England's need for a fleet, powerful beyond the possibility of attack, is absolute. Her existence depends upon it. It is not so with France or Germany. There is no menace in England's navy. It is the police of the ocean—a guarantee for good order and the world's uninterrupted commerce.

No nation is so great a respecter of the rights of others, and no nation pursues her way with more peaceful methods or with less bluster.

What a time for platitudinising lonely cruising does provide! What else can a man do when there is no wind and it is too dark to read?

Lamps, however, have to be lit, and everything made snug for the night. Although as yet there is no wind, it is an absolute certainty that there will be more than enough before daylight comes again.

So the night begins.

The little vessel is perhaps about eight miles out from Cap de la Heve. There is about seventy-two miles yet to sail before she will be in home waters.

Still there is no breeze—not even enough to steer by. After taking a good look round, seeing that the lights are all right, and that only one vessel is within a couple of miles at least (and that one merely a pilot-boat hove-to while waiting for a job), the skipper dives below, resolved on getting a few winks before the fun begins.

Perhaps he had lost consciousness. Maybe he was but half asleep, but there seemed a buzzing in the air, followed by a tremendous crash—a mighty noise which reverberated and boomed over the sea.

“Great Scott! what a flash!” exclaimed the skipper, as he rose up and rubbed his eyes. “There must be a pretty good thunderstorm going on.”

And there was.

The wind, too, seemed to have come at last; at least, as the skipper put on his sea boots and oilskins, he could feel as well as hear that the little ship was hurtling through the water.

He looked at the glass: it was 29·13, and going back fast: the time was midnight.

He went on deck—how pitch dark it was! A glance at the binnacle showed him that the wind was heading the course for England.

It was raining in torrents. The sea was a little quieter, but the breeze was piping up. It would be better to hand the topsail and perhaps change the jib.

When this job was over it seemed as if the mainsail would want reefing; but that was a business the skipper decided to leave for awhile. Very likely the thunderstorm would end in another calm. How it did lighten! The blue flashes darted in all directions, like angry snakes, striking wildly at all points of the compass.

The thunder rolled along the horizon or crashed in crackling volleys overhead. The rain pelted on the sea as if shot were falling on a tin plate; the water hissed under the scourge.

There was plenty to do now, however. The yacht was going through the water about five miles an hour. She could not lay her course indeed, but was running almost parallel with the trend of the French coast from Cap de la Heve to Cap Antifer.

How blindingly the lightning flashed! The darkness which followed each brilliant second seemed so solid as fully to justify the expression "darkness which could be felt." It pressed on the eyeballs and refused to be pierced.

Is it thus with the shadows of death? Does that darkness also press in so stifling a way on the straining eyeballs?

* * * * *

“And if yer did, where’s the fun?”

Truly the mate would have chuckled had he seen the *Undine* in the storm.

Fun! What is fun? Surely fun is that sensation of enjoyment which each man appreciates in his own way. Was the skipper of the *Undine* enjoying himself, then? Possibly; indeed, very probably.

To most natures novelty is always attractive. To experience adventures which have afforded much interest when read about is a decided amusement to some minds. It is a real pleasure to discover that one can face circumstances which to many people would be trying, without yielding to nerves. It is most interesting, also, to watch Nature in her wildest moods; and to feel that the individual is coping with her in dangerous moments, and is so far able to hold his own. There is excitement, at any rate, and this is a large element of fun.

Perhaps, however, this is not the common view of fun. Fun must be revelry, jollity, mirth. There can be none of this where there is solitude, least of all where solitude is accompanied with danger, darkness, and discomfort. So it would seem to most people.

After all, the mate may have been right when he could see no fun in such conditions.

The mate was a materialist: the owner of the *Undine* an idealist. To such dissimilar natures there can be no common ground of fun.

Surely if Truth was a puzzle to mocking Pilate, Fun is quite as much a mystery to others.

What is fun to many may be death to more.

But the elements were having their fun, too. The Spirit of the Storm was rollicking over the sea.

As the thunder reverberated in more distant rumblings, another sound became evident.

The wind was getting up. The sea was rising, too. The white crests tossed, phantom-like, out of the blackness around; the spray was driven against the cheeks and into the eyes of the helmsman.

After keeping on the port tack for an hour or so, the vessel was put about and pounded against the sea on the starboard tack.

"At this rate I shall be some time making the Wight," thought the skipper. "To sail twice seventy-two miles at the rate of five miles an hour will take nearly twenty-nine hours."

Had he seen as much of single-handed sailing then as he did afterwards, this inexperienced sailor would have hove to and gone tranquilly to roost for a spell. But, being new to the work, he rushed on against the pounding sea.

So the night wore on.

Slowly the dawn grew over the tumbling waters—a pale and sickly dawn, giving promise of wind and wet.

As the day broke a lurid light spread over the pale sky, where the storm-rack was scudding in livid patches as it had done the night before.

Sleepily the solitary mariner looked round.

The sea was tumbling all about him. The wind had lulled for a time, and the boat was making little progress. France had disappeared during the night. There was absolutely nothing in sight except the tossing sea.

"I'd better go about, I think," said the skipper; and about he went, to pound slowly along on the port-tack again.

It was all a novel experience; for the owner of the

Undine had never been out of sight of land before this trip to Havre. He had not reckoned on having to turn to windward for such a distance. He had no log, and could only guess approximately the progress he was making. The wind was dead in his teeth. This being the case, and seeing what a long job he had before him, he went below, after hauling over the foresheet to windward, and made some tea and boiled a couple of eggs; in fact, he made an excellent preliminary breakfast.

When he came on deck again, the fiery look in the sky had quite faded away. The wind was already beginning to moan against the sails.

By nine o'clock there was a strong wind blowing, and the sea was becoming difficult to manage. "What a beautiful little boat she is!" thought her owner, as the *Undine* rose to a nasty breaking wave and glided serenely down on the other side without shipping a drop of water.

The little vessel was indeed making excellent weather of it.

About ten a smoke was visible on the horizon. From the way it increased in density it was clear some fast vessel was approaching. In another quarter of an hour the mail steamer from Southampton splashed quickly past and went rolling away to Havre.

"Then I'm not far wrong in my course," thought the skipper.

So the day passed. Dinner time came, and the meal was eaten with due regard to appetite while the little ship lay-to, easily rising and falling to the seas.

So passed the afternoon. The wind freshened and backed. Rain came down in squalls. It was possible now to lay a straight course.

People seem to imagine that because a man is alone in a boat, he can never leave the helm. This is a decided fallacy. In a short boat like the *Undine*, it is true, it is not easy to lash the helm so as to make her keep her course for long, or prevent her from either paying off or coming up to the wind too much ; but with the foresail hauled slightly to windward, such a boat will go ahead well and keep on her course, too, if it is one necessitating sailing close-hauled. In running it is practically impossible to leave the helm—one must then lie-to.

But in a long sail like a trip to Havre and back, how much time, after all, does one lose? Half an hour more or less is of little consequence, and a comfortable meal is of most decided importance.

So the skipper thinks as he eats a hearty tea of sundry meats and boiled eggs. Refreshed, he next consults the chart, and decides that he must be not more than some eighteen miles off the Wight.

Then he looks at the glass. It is still very low, and inclined even to fall.

Lamps have next to be thought of. Then, when all is tidied up and stowed snugly, matches being put ready to hand and all preparations for the dark complete, the skipper goes on deck and takes a look round.

The scene is not a cheerful one. The whole horizon is bounded by the sea. Not another vessel is in sight.

The boat's head is pointing in the right direction, how ever, and, even allowing for only four miles an hour, land ought to be visible before darkness once more broods over the deep.

But it is evident there is something arresting the skipper's attention.

Far away ahead there seems a low, faint film on the very edge of the northern horizon.

To the west there seems another shadow—only a speck, as it were, but the shadow looks harder than the edge of a cloud would be, and more clearly defined at so low a level.

After another long look the skipper makes up his mind it is land, and it should be the back of the Isle of Wight.

Thinking, however, over the many tacks he has made, and the great possibility of being out in his rough estimate of the miles sailed on each board, he hopes that before night falls he will be able to verify his position a little more accurately.

What a time it does take from the moment one first sights high land until a sailing vessel closes with the coast near enough to make out objects with sufficient accuracy!

An inexperienced cruiser thinks that once he has made a landfall all his adventures are over, that he will speedily be in port, and resting on his moorings.

It was pitch dark again before the *Undine* had sailed half the distance. Ahead were many lights.

To a novice night sailing is decidedly puzzling. It takes some time to make out which way a vessel is actually coming, even when her lights are clearly seen.

The difficulty is less with steam vessels, but even after some experience it takes a long look to decide on the exact course of a sailing vessel.

Theoretically, nothing ought to be easier. A glance should suffice.

There's the green light. Then it's a sailing vessel coming across our bows on the port tack.

So far so good. Only this same green light does not in the least necessarily say whether the stranger is crossing one's course or simply going in the same direction. This point can only be determined after careful watching.

Distance, too, is very difficult to decide ; and it is surprising how often even professional seamen, after many years' experience, are mistaken in their judgment. If it were not so there would not be such a number of accidents as are constantly occurring.

Then again the lights from the lighthouses and light-ships are not at first readily made out—not from any great distance anyhow, unless the night is very fine and clear.

Many a curious tale could be told of the panics and mistakes which have occurred to gold-laced captains of many years' standing, as well as to the amateur who has only just launched out into deep water, and is sailing his first nocturnal voyage.

Some incidents, indeed, are known to a few, which would hardly be believed if told as they really happened. The facts exceed even the limits of caricature, so laughable are the actual details, and yet so tragic they might have been in their consequences.

The great lights, such as that of St. Catherine or Cap de la Heve, are soon made out ; but the lesser luminaries, like the Owers and the Nab light-ships, are not so unmistakable until a vessel is within a few miles of them.

When the *Undine* had sailed some hours in the dark, and was steering for the Nab light, or what the skipper thought to be that beacon, the weather took a bad turn again.

Rain began to come down in torrents, and the wind blew up cold and strong.

In a few minutes everything was obscured. But the owner of the *Undine* had no anxiety; he knew he must soon be in shelter, and steered confidently by the wind. So the little boat thrashed on through the darkness.

The wind increased and the sea got up. Still the lonely amateur had no misgivings; he must be in shelter before another hour or so. From the quarter from which the wind was blowing it would be smooth water sailing all along the Bembridge shore, as far as Sea View, at any rate.

Still the sea rose; it was getting short and steep, and the big white crests gleamed livid and green as the glare of the starboard light fell on them from time to time. The helmsman's eyes were becoming very sore from the rain or spray, or both together.

At last, as no lights were visible, in spite of the vessel sailing fast, a slightly anxious feeling began to assert itself. If the Nab should have been passed and the sea was still so rough, it must be because the course was being kept too much to the eastward.

This would be dangerous, as it must eventually lead on to the sands off Chichester Harbour or the very nasty shoals off Selsey Bill.

The skipper accordingly hauled on the wind and steered as close as he could go. This ought to lead into quiet waters, and towards peaceful slumber.

Still the sea hurtled and dashed over the bows. Instead of decreasing in steepness and size, the waves seemed, if anything, larger and more vicious.

This state of affairs was a little unaccountable. The binnacle light had not been lit, so that the course was not clearly indicated. In fact, the too confiding amateur was trusting to his knowledge of the coast when once he

considered his position assured by the glimpse he had obtained of the Nab light.

He had been steering by the wind since the rain had blotted out the lights. He could hardly have done a more risky thing, as there are few less trustworthy things than the wind. It is worse even than a company promoter.

After sailing another quarter of an hour, and neither land nor light appearing, while the sea was heavy and increasingly difficult to manage, the skipper decided to go a little freer.

Hardly had he altered the helm and eased off the sheets when, to his surprise, he saw a black thing ahead of him. By luffing hard he was just able to clear it, and the next instant the starboard light shone on a large buoy painted black and white in stripes. It was the Bembridge ledge buoy at the east end of the Isle of Wight—the very buoy from which the *Undine* had taken her departure three days before!

The buoy, however, was on the wrong side of the vessel. No wonder the sea had been rough! Instead of steering along the east end of the island, the little ship was heading down Channel again, before I had altered the helm.

The wind had backed more to the south, and as it backed so the *Undine* had sailed close-hauled with it.

It was a fortunate chance sighting the buoy like that, especially in such a dark night and after so long a passage. Luckily buoys are usually placed in plenty of water for so small a craft as the *Undine*. If I was on the wrong side when it turned up there was abundance of water between it and the dangerous ledge to which it acts as sentry.

In a few minutes more the *Undine* was slipping along in smooth water and making short miles of it to Ryde.

Then indeed the skipper felt pleased. As old Homer hath it: "His dear heart rejoiced." Instead of wet, doubt, and anxious peering in the darkness, with every prospect of a night out, but under less entertaining circumstances than figure on the hoardings of London and the suburbs, there was now a certainty of a safe anchorage, a warm bunk, and those creature comforts which are so delicious when earned by hard physical work.

For after all it is only physical work which makes one fully realise the pleasures of bodily comfort. Intellectual work seldom produces that rampant desire to satisfy hunger and appreciate to the full the joys of warmth, rest, and eating and drinking which physical toil does.

How good it is when the intellectual nature is for a few hours stifled and the carnal side of one's being is allowed to have full play!

Did not an ancient poet remark long ago how delicious it was to play the fool at times?

By midnight Ryde was reached. So sleepy was the skipper that he nearly ran down the Quarantine Hulks, and at last finding the tide was against him and the wind off shore, he dropped anchor a little to the east of the entrance of Wootton Creek, and turned in. It was raining again in torrents.

When he came on deck next morning the scene was a bright one. Instead of a sodden sea and sky, Quarr Woods were glinting in the warm light of the midday sun, for the weary skipper had slept the sleep of the just, and had hardly stirred since he turned in at two the night before until about half-past eleven next morning. A crisp little easterly breeze was curling the east going tide. Over Portsmouth way a gunboat was every now and then sending off puffs.

of smoke, followed by a dull boom as she went through her gunnery practice.

From the end of the long pier which connects Ryde with the sea, steamers were ever and anon coming and going. A distant sound of brass bands floated fitfully across the Solent from Gosport way; while a great ocean liner was hooting and roaring as she eased off steam to take her pilot on board.

The narrow waters were covered with craft. White sails, brown sails, weather-worn sails, steamers large and small, ocean tramps, smart steam yachts, fussy passenger steamers, rapid excursion boats, all were hurrying or idling on the sparkling sea. What a contrast to French waters!

Perhaps no stretch of water in the world can show such a collection of craft as can the Solent in the months of July and August.

After placidly contemplating the brilliant scene, the skipper of the *Undine* contentedly turned to the satisfying of the inner man. The kettle was steaming recklessly in the forecastle, and a pleasant smell of frying bacon floated on the fresh air.

By the time breakfast was over the tide had turned; in another hour Old Castle Point was rounded. Cowes and all its yachts came open, and in a few more minutes the *Undine* was riding to her moorings again with a demure air, as if she knew nothing of French waters, and had not been so lately kicking her heels in the excitement of the Channel dance.

With the futility which marks most of the proceedings of our coastguard, no one asked any questions as to where the *Undine* had been.

It is only when a little yacht sails from Cowes to the

Hamble, or Bembridge, or Hurst Camber at Quay Haven, or such-like world-renowned ports that minute inquiries are made. In Fowey, however, they are so very zealous that even if the amateur should go for an afternoon sail he will most likely be hailed on his return as to his voyage and the possibly nefarious doings of his craft.

Such attentions, however, only help to make cruising more interesting, for is it not gratifying to the secret pride of Jones to find himself taken for a fierce smuggler, a lawless dare-devil of the Jack Sheppard-of-the-sea kind of thing?

So here the skipper has returned at last, and still the question of the jeering mate jars upon his ear: "And if yer did, where's the fun?"

Perhaps, after all, the greatest fun is when the voyage is over. To have accomplished successfully what few would attempt at all must always offer some elements wherein a glimmering of fun may lurk.

Cruise VI.

“Who ran to catch me when I fell?”

PART I.

“WELL, of all the stupid idiots!—I say, look out!”
But it was too late. There was a smothered cry, a splash, and before anything could be done the girl was in the water, hanging head downwards and clutching at the gunwale with both hands.

How the accident had happened it was not easy to explain. A little cutter was slipping gaily through the smooth sea. Crossing its bows was a shore boat. Two youths were rowing, a girl was steering in that vague way peculiar to the sex, that is to say, without any fixed ideas as to a course, but pulling the yoke lines now this way, now that, as caprice or any object in the water attracted her.

In the bow was sitting another girl, poised in an easy posture for surveying the horizon, but also admirably placed for instant immersion should any accident occur.

Apparently the accident did occur, although the why and the wherefore were not so obvious.

Perhaps the approach of the yacht attracted her, and so she lost her balance, or maybe the rowers gave a sudden

THE YOUNG WOMAN WAS, FOR A FEW MOMENTS, CHIEFLY CONSPICUOUS BY HER HANDS AND FEET.



jerk, for they were not very skilful at the oar. Anyway, the fact was sufficiently evident.

The damsel was in the water. Her situation was decidedly precarious.

The young woman was, for a few moments, chiefly conspicuous by her hands and feet. Her head emerged for a little space, only to fall back again. Her hands relaxed. The grip on the gunwale, which her knees had hitherto held, gave way. She fell entirely into the sea.

Apparently, the rowers had not understood what was happening. The girl who was steering was so intent on watching the yacht, that she too did not at once take in the situation.

The man in the yacht luckily saw the whole catastrophe. He was alone, but he did not hesitate a second.

He put down the helm, let the vessel come up into the wind, jumped on to the counter, pulled up the dinghy, and springing in, rowed at once to where the girl could still be seen splashing in the water.

The dinghy was very small, but by carefully balancing himself, the man was able to pull the limp figure out of the water, and lay her in the boat.

The whole affair had taken place so rapidly that the immersion did not seem to have affected the girl very much. She had swallowed but little water, and was really only the worse for a wetting.

Without further fuss, therefore, her rescuer went alongside the boat, and transferred the damp, limp, dragged figure to her own friends. Then he rowed away as quickly as he could to catch up his own vessel, which was shaking her sails impatiently as she fell off and came up again in the light summer breeze.

That afternoon, as the little cutter returned on her way to her moorings, the skipper was aware of a girlish figure standing as far out on the rocks as she could, and waving a handkerchief to someone at sea.

He looked round; no other boat seemed to be near. Then it dawned upon him that possibly it might be the young girl whom he had picked out of the water in the morning.

He waved a greeting back, and luffed as near to the rocks as he could.

"Will you come ashore presently? I want to thank you!" called a clear, healthy young voice.

"All right!" shouted the skipper, amused at the frank freedom of the other. "I will when I can, but I am not going to bring up here. My harbour is further on round the Point."

"Well, I hope I shall see you again. I am very much obliged for your pulling me out this morning. Good night."

"Good night."

The yacht slipped along in the golden sea. A gentle breeze blew from the velvety woods where they whispered over the sandy beach. Behind them glowed the glory of the setting sun. It was a lovely scene. Tranquil and full of poetry, balmy with the scent of fresh cut hay, and the odours of a fertile upland of clover, wild thyme, and meadow-sweet.

The girl stood watching the yacht until it had rounded the Point, when she walked slowly back to the little terrace, where the chatter of the town was most in play.

"This ought to be the beginning of some fun," thought the occupant of the yacht as he looked back from time to time, to watch the graceful figure of the girl stepping

lightly from rock to rock until the intervening point of trees cut off further view.

And then he smiled, that solitary man, for the words of the mate at Havre came back to his mind—"And if so, where's the fun."

"I'll go ashore to-morrow," thought the skipper; "I want to see old Mursell."

Slowly the yacht slipped through the water. The sun had set by now. A lovely glow of golden light flushed over sea and sky. A mellow depth of purple shadows streamed across the water. The stakes which marked the channel flickered in long ribbons over the glassy swell. The breeze had entirely died away. All nature was languorously brooding, wrapt in the placid charm of tranquil beauty.

"Well, as the monk remarked in 'Hypatia,' of all carnal pleasures there cometh satiety at the last—as even of sitting—so I suppose I must row a bit."

Slowly the yacht slipped in over the tide, urged by the even sweep of the long oar.

"Hullo, Jim, how long have you been here?" called the skipper as he slowly came alongside a smart-looking cutter. She was long and narrow, as was the fashion in the seventies.

"Since dinner, sir—the Governor, he's been a askin' for you."

"Has he? What does he want, d'you know?"

"Yes, I rayther think he wants you to race with them a Thursday. But there he be. All right, sir, I'm comin'!"

Slowly the little yacht slipped up to her moorings, while Jim got into the dinghy and rowed ashore for the Governor.

"Oh, we've been looking out for you," called a cheery voice, as the dinghy was rowed alongside the small craft, now

safe on her moorings, while the skipper was busy putting away the gear.

"What's up?"

"Why, we've a race on on Thursday; Gordon wants to know if you'll come?"

"All right. What time?"

"Oh, about eleven, but we must have a turn all together to-morrow. Can you come?"

"Humph! I don't know. Shall we take long?"

"About a couple of hours or so. Start about ten. That'll suit, won't it?"

"Right you are. Who's going?"

"There'll be Macdonald, Wilcox, Billy, you and me. Gordon won't be there to-morrow. We'll pick him up on Thursday."

"That'll do. Put me ashore, will you, old chap?"

Next morning the sun rose on a misty world. It did not take long, however, to assert itself. The mist curled up and faded away, leaving a blue sea, a blue sky, and a smiling land.

A "Click! click!" floated across the water as craft of all sorts shortened in their cables to profit by the breeze which came in with the young flood.

In the pretty little basin which served for a harbour to Bridgefort, the usual work was going on. The few yachts lying there were being sluiced down, and scrubbed, "shammy" leathered, and mopped after the proper style.

Ashore the regular set of "loafers" were lounging on the beach.

"It's goin' to be a rare day, sir," said Jim, as he touched his cap to the skipper of the little yacht astern. "I gues

we'll have some fun to-day. You gents has got to do all our work, and we mayn't lend ne'er a hand."

"Why, we are not going to race to-day, Jim."

"No, but you've all got to re-hearse. You've got to see what you can do," and Jim grinned, as did the boy, who had stopped scrubbing the deck to listen to the conversation.

"*Forget-me-not*, ahoy " echoed cheerily from the shore.

"There's the major a-callin'. All right, sir," and Jim jumped into the dinghy and rowed off.

Presently he returned with two amateurs sitting in the stern sheets.

One was very tall and lanky, the other looked chubby and comfortable.

"Hullo, Jack! old chappie! Up already? Why, you are an early bird," called out the Chubby One.

"Why, I've been up hours, Billy. Where's the Governor, Jim?"

"He ain't a comin' off just yet. We're to get all ready for startin' as soon as there's water enough over the bar. Will you come aboard, sir, or shall I fetch you?"

"Why, fetch me, of course."

"I say, get in gently, man. Let me introduce you to Mr. Meekin—Mr. Meekin—Mr. Jack-all-Alone," said the Chubby One, doing the honours blandly.

"My crikey! That be a rum-lookin' cove," said the boy to Jim, the skipper of the *Forget-me-not*, in a subdued voice,



MR. MEEKIN.

as he took the painter. "He be over seven feet if he be an inch. He be sure-ly."

Mr. Meekin certainly did look lengthy as he unfolded himself and climbed on board.

"Now, gentlemen, we will get the sails ready if you please," remarked Jim.

Whereupon the new-comers set to work with a will.

"We'll set the mainsail first, as she's ridin' head to wind and tide, if you please, gentlemen."

Off went the cover, the halyards were hooked on, and up went the white sail.

Mr. Meekin and Billy took the peak, Jack-all-Alone and Jim the main halyards.

"Steady, gents!" called Jim. "You've got her peaked too high. Slack up a bit.—Why, wherever are you a-goin', sir?" added the astonished Jim, as Mr. Meekin began to try and climb the mast.

"Oh, I thought you said go up it. You said something about 'up a bit,' you know," replied the over-zealous Meekin.

The boy was nearly strangled by a sudden fit of laughter, which he tried vainly to repress. "Oh, what larks! 'E ain't green, oh no!"

The mainsail was now set. The chain was shortened in.

"We'll have the jib up next. That's it, sir. Will you unstop the lashin' on the bowsprit?"

"Aye, aye," replied Billy, quite nautically, and proceeded to get astride the bowsprit for the purpose.

Mr. Meekin, with ever-praiseworthy zeal, sought for the jib halyards and repeatedly rejected the chain which the boy offered him.

"No, no, my good lad! I don't want that. I want a rope, not the anchor chain."

"The hanchor chain! Oh lor! He'll be the death o' me, he will. The jib halyard the hanchor chain! Oh my!"

"Shut up, you young sand eel!" growled Jim. "Here, sir, this is the jib halyard. You pull on it as soon as I sez Haul. Now then, Tom, out with the mud hook—Haul away."

A startled cry broke from the Chubby One. "I say, look out!—confound it."

But it was too late. Mr. Meekin was hauling with a will. So busy was he that he never heard the cry, or the shout from Jim. Hand over hand he hauled at the chain. The jib fluttered up. The anchor was already away. Jack-all-Alone was at the helm.

"I say, do set that jib properly," he shouted; "we shan't clear the schooner ahead if you don't. Why, where's Mr. Wilcox. Billy, where are you?"

"Here," cried a feeble voice from forward.

"Where?" exclaimed Jack.

"Why, overboard, to be sure, sir! This 'ere gent has chucked him into the sea."

Meanwhile the cutter was gathering way. The water was gurgling under the stem.

"I say, lend a hand," cried the Chubby One. The voice came spluttering and weak from the lee side of the yacht. Frantically Mr. Meekin hurled himself under the boom. He leant over; his preternatural length enabled him to reach the outstretched hand. Billy clutched it with the grip of despair. The unfortunate young man could not swim.

"I say, hold my legs," gasped Mr. Meekin. He had overreached himself and was convulsively clutching at the deck with his toes.

"Ready about!" called out Jack-all-Alone. "Look after the sheets, Tom. Jim, catch hold of that gentleman's legs."

The smart racer shot up into the wind, only just in time to clear the jibboom of an old coasting schooner, but Jim was too late. The lank body of Mr. Meekin went slowly overboard.

"Blest if this ain't the rummest start!" gasped Jim, as he ran off to let go the dinghy.

When the two dripping figures came on board, Jim was addressing them in terms of remonstrance.

"It was *not* my fault," said Billy. "Whatever made you hoist the jib before I was ready, Meekin?"

"Why, the man told me to haul, so of course I hauled," retorted Mr. Meekin.

"No, I never did," said Jim.

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Meekin, aghast at the contradiction. "I heard you distinctly."

"Why, I was a speakin' to the boy, not to you, sir."

"Well, you might have asked if all was ready before hauling like that and chucking me clean into the water," growled the still injured Billy.

"Never mind, Billy. Go below and change your things," said Jack.

"Well, I think someone might have held on to me, when I tried to pull you out," retorted Mr. Meekin.

"We couldn't; you slipped overboard so fast. Jim didn't try to put his foot on some of you, but you paid out too quickly."

Mr. Meekin had brought a bag with him, and Jim lent Billy a suit of the Governor's flannels, so the difficulty was soon got over; only the appearance of Mr. Meekin in a

correct morning suit was somewhat incongruous, especially as he dispensed with collar or shirt.

"They'll be dry, soon," he remarked, wringing out his flannels.

Meanwhile the yacht was slipping through the water. The foresail was set by now, and the topsail was being handed up.

"If it's a day like this to-morrow, Jim, we ought to do well," said Jack-all-Alone.

"So we shall, sir. There ain't one of 'em can touch her, not if she's handled as she should be. You'd better go about now, sir."

"All right, Jim; I was putting the helm down."

It's astonishing how jealous the professional yachtsman is of an amateur that knows too much. Jim had not thought of going about, really; he was, without being conscious of it, quite comfortable as to the navigation. He knew the man at the helm was quite as well acquainted with the channel as he was, but yet he could not refrain from offering his advice, although he saw the yacht was being put about before he spoke.

The sea was just ruffled by a steady little breeze. The wet flannels were fluttering in the air.

"The Governor 'ull wonder what we're up to with all they rags a-hanging about. We've got to pick him up off the Hard yonder."

It was a short run down to the roadstead off "The Hard," when once the end of the Sandspit was rounded. Here the yacht was brought up into the wind, while the boy rowed ashore for the others.

In a few minutes more a cheery voice hailed the yacht from the dinghy as it danced back over the rippling sea:

"*Forget-me-not*, ahoy! Is it washing day? Billy, my boy, who's your tailor? Why don't you shake the reefs out?"



"THE MAN TOLD ME TO HAUL."

Evidently Mr. Meekin was a new-comer. Billy had already explained to Jack that he was an awfully good sort, "Not much used to racing, but a capital hand at a rope."

"Ah—yes—I can see he is at a chain, anyhow," replied Jack.

As soon as the Governor came on board, the headsails were allowed to draw, and away the yacht stood to run down the coast, and past the little seaside town off which Jack-all-Alone had picked up the young lady the day before.

"What we'd better do, I think," said the Governor, "is to put the boat on all her courses. As we've got to handle her entirely by ourselves tomorrow, we'd better see all about it. Jim, all you've got to do is to tell us if we're wrong."

This was evidently quite to Jim and Tom's satisfaction.

Billy and Mr. Meekin were told off to the jib and fore-sheet,

the Governor took the helm. Jack-all-Alone and Mr. Wilcox, who had come off with the Governor, took care of the main sheet. Jim and the boy looked on.

"We're one short to-day, but we shall be all right to-morrow," remarked the Governor.

The yacht was going finely. She was small, not more than 10 tons racing measurement, but her sails, spars, and gear were heavy for so small a craft. Her draft of water was considerable, for in those days depth—not breadth—was the rule.

"I say, this place is getting as bad as Margate!" the Governor exclaimed. "Look at those 'Arrys bathing there, right in the midst of a whole lot of decent people."

"Well, it seems to me the decent people would be a little more decent if they moved away," remarked Jack.

"There's a row boat right ahead, sir," called out Jim.

"All right, I see her. Bother those girls; they're rowing slap across us."

The quiet sea was covered with small craft. Among the crowd of rowing boats the yacht glided with stately beauty. Her canvas was all drawing as it ought to do. Her paint and varnish were glossy and bright. No wonder there was a flutter among the holiday crowd, or that the girls in the boat steered as near as they could to see the dainty craft.

"Confound those girls! They've actually altered their course again. If I luff now I shall be into that pack of boats on the port. Go forward, Jack, there's a good chap, and tell them to get out of the way. Whichever way I head her those fools of girls put themselves across us."

Jack walked to the bows, where he found Billy and Mr. Meekin, much interested in the movements of the boat.

"I say, take in those togs," said Billy. "I should think they're dry enough now, eh?" Secretly the chubby Bill was congratulating himself on having secured a suit of flannels, especially as he glanced at the lanky Meekin.

An absence of collar and cuffs exposed the unnecessary extent of this gentleman's neck and wrists. His complexion, naturally cadaverous, was now assuming a toad-like texture, owing to the bright sun and keen air, which mottled the face with large freckles.

"Why, I believe he thinks he's quite a masher," commented the outraged Billy, as he saw a portentous leer pass over Mr. Meekin's face, and, following the direction of his glance, noticed that it was fixed on the damsels in the boat ahead.

"I say, Billy, tell them to get out of the way, will you?" said Jack.

"All right, old man. They're not bad-looking, are they?—It'd be a good lark to run them down, eh!" Then he called out in his most unctuous tones:

"I say, I beg your pardon, but would you kindly back your left oar?—No, not that one—Great Scott! we really shall be over them! *THAT* oar—The one in the bows!" cried Billy quite excitedly.

"Luff! luff hard!" called out Jack peremptorily. A brief exclamation from the stern showed the caution was being obeyed. The head sails fluttered as the yacht shot up. There was a little cry from the boat, a wild struggle, a splitting crack, and in the bottom of the boat lay a confused heap of snowy frills, dainty hosiery, and sand shoes

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"Oh, crikey!" chuckled the delighted Tom.

"Billy, I'm quite ashamed of you ; look the other way," said Jack severely.

"I'm really very sorry," the Governor was saying.

"Can we lend you any assistance? I'm afraid the oar is broken."

"No, thank you," replied a clear voice. "We can manage quite well. You're not hurt, Jessie, are you?"

"N—n—no! I think not! Oh, what brutes!" came from the struggling drapery in the bottom of the boat.

But the yacht had gone clear by now. Beyond the oar having knocked one of the girls over backwards, no further harm was done—excepting to the injured feelings of the victim.

"Did you hear them laughing?" gasped the upset one as she picked herself up as quickly as she could.

"What horrid wretches! And how badly they steer, too!"

But Billy could hear no more. He was truly sorry for the accident, and was nearly jumping into the boat as it drifted past. Mr. Meekin, too, had gone so far as to get over the gunwale and stand in the channels, leaning over the water like an inquiring giraffe. In this way he obtained an excellent idea of the whole situation.

"That's an uncommonly pretty girl, my boy!" he remarked to Billy.

"Is she?" grunted the Chubby One. "Well, I can't say I saw much of her."

"Ah, but I did," retorted Mr. Meekin, with a horrible grimace.

"I say, Jack! I should not have expected that of you!" remonstrated Billy abruptly, in a shocked tone, "especially after the way you spoke to me."

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Jack innocently.

"It is not usual to wave one's hand to strange young ladies; at least, not in the circles in which I move."

"Oh—so you don't recognise your friends, eh? How's that? Owing to cramp or rheumatism?"

"Jack, you're quibbling. Those young persons are not your friends, so it's no good trying that on."

"How do you know? As a matter of fact, I do happen to know one of those girls."

"Really! which one? Not the one with the pretty frills, and—ahem—nice stockings?"

"I can't say," replied Jack drily.

"Well, they seem to be getting on all right. There's a Johnnie going off to them," remarked Billy. "I think if you do know them you might introduce me, eh?" he added, insinuatingly.

"Ah!—eh?—By the way, let's give a hand on the topsail tack. Slack up the sheet a bit—that's it. Now then, haul away; make fast," and Jack walked aft to look after the main sheet.

"It's a curious coincidence," he thought. "That young woman seems to spend her time in getting in the way of any craft about. I wonder if she's disappointed she wasn't saved again?"

Jack's nature was a trifle cynical. It was a pity, for he lost much amusement thereby, and, moreover, was a good deal misjudged. The man who shows more feeling than he possesses always scores; whereas he who shows less loses many opportunities.

Dickens will always be more popular than Thackeray, for the former is loud in his exaggerations of true feeling, while the latter mercilessly ridicules what is falsely

exaggerated. The one is always in hysterics. The other is profoundly contemptuous for the hysterical.

But hysterics evoke attention and even sympathy, while self-control passes unnoticed.

"I think we'd better do a bit of drill," said the Governor, when this little incident was over. "Jack, will you take the helm? I'm going to have the spinnaker hoisted."

The course was now altered for a run to leeward, and the mysteries of the spinnaker were unfolded.

It is a puzzling sail to set. The difficulties were not lessened by the excessive ardour of Mr. Meekin, who at last was sent aloft to unstop the spinnaker boom from the crosstree.

"Why, he'd almost do for a spinnaker boom himself," said Tom aside to Jim.

After much confusion, however, the big, light sail fluttered up, the canvas bellied out, and the yacht flew through the water before the rippling breeze.

"She'll do all right," said the Governor; "we'll drop anchor outside and have lunch."



"**A**ND so you really are going to race to-morrow, Mr. Jack?"

"Yes, I expect we shall be passing here about two, and four, if there's any breeze. We go twice round the course."

"I wish I could see you. I shall get Jessie and Bob to row me out."

"Well, I hope you'll keep clear of us, if you do. You seem to have a strange aptitude for accidents."

"How very unkind! But really it wasn't our fault this morning, was it? You know how badly your helmsman steered."

"Poor old Governor!" thought Jack. "Well," he added, aloud, "you did puzzle us a bit. You should never attempt to cross the bows of a sailing boat so near as that. And then you actually stopped and turned round again."

"Well, I don't think you need scold me so——" The girl paused and picked a bit of fern from the mossy bank where they were sitting. "You see," she went on presently, with her head bent down rather, "Jessie wanted to see if she knew anyone on board. She's got some friends about here. They, too, have a yacht."

"Oh, I see. So you really are none the worse for your ducking of yesterday?"

"Oh, dear, no. I don't look very ill, do I?"

The demure tone in which this was said, accompanied by the coquettish glance which darted from two bright eyes shadowed by waving masses of ruddy golden hair, should have told the man by her side that this artless girl was not quite the *ingénue* most people would have taken her for, had not this suspicion already crossed his mind.

"No, I can't say there looks much the matter with you. In fact, if I told you how I think you do look, you might accuse me of paying you compliments, Miss Dolly."

"Well, then, do, for I like compliments—from those I like," added Miss Dolly.

Her companion smiled. It was clear he would have to take care. The Sirens are not such fabled dangers as some may think.

"So you really want me to tell you exactly how you look to me, do you?"

"Yes, do! I long to know," said the girl softly.

"Perhaps you won't like it if I do."

"Shan't I? How horrid! Do I look so nasty then?"

"Listen. I see first of all two bright, rather saucy, blue eyes—eyes which know very well how to play the mischief with a fellow's heart, or what he thinks is that important organ in his physical economy."

"How nice! But what long words you do use! You remind me of my copy-book—but I beg your pardon; do please go on!"

"Very well. Under the eyes I see two red lips. One is rather short and twisty, like what I believe is called a cupid's bow. The other is full and more like a rosebud."

"Oh dear, how very poetical you are! I didn't know yachting men were so funny. But it's quite nice—do pray go on."

"I can't see the face very well because you will hold your head down, but I can see a great quantity of curly, wavy golden hair, and it's quite untidy."

"You *are* nasty! I did brush it and do it up before I came out, but it's your fault for bringing me such a scrambly walk. Do go on; I wish you wouldn't stop so, and look at me like that."

"How can I tell you how you look if I don't?"

"Well, of course, but you needn't stare so. Can't you remember a little?"

"Oh, very well then, I'll remember——"

"Oh, turn round! How rude you are! You need not turn your back on me—I can't hear."

"But I shall look at you. You don't want that, and besides, I shouldn't remember then."

"Oh, *do* go on; you are so tiresome. You had—why that's one of your friends on the yacht. Look!" broke off the girl.

"So it is. Let's crouch down a bit; perhaps he won't see us. It's Billy and Meekin."

"They'll see your boat, won't they? Have they come to look for you?"

"No, to tell the truth, I think they've come to look for you or your friend Miss Jessie."

"Have they—why?" asked the girl artlessly.

"Ah, so you can't guess? There, they've gone past, so we're quite safe. Now tell me who was that young man that came out to help you?"

"That—ah, let me see. Who was it? Was it a tall boy, rather dark?"

"Oh, I say, you are a little humbug. You can't have forgotten already."

"I wish you wouldn't call me names. Do you know, I don't think it's at all proper to be sitting out here like this. It's getting quite dark."

But, nevertheless, the after-glow had died away and the stars had come out by myriads before the two figures rose from the grassy bank among the tumbled boulders under the whispering fir trees.

"What is that you're saying? I hate people who mumble."

"It was only a verse of an old song. I daresay you know it."

"Tell it me."

"How delicious is the winning of a——"

"Yes—yes—I know; but I do wish you wouldn't talk so loud. Oh, do come on, I shall get into such a row."

* * * *

"Well," thought Jack, as he rowed back. "It's lucky I inherit the tastes of a sea-rover. If I didn't I might find myself bowled over pretty soon. What a blessing is the

instinct of vagabondage ! Heigho ! After all, though, she's a very pretty girl, and as sweet as she's pretty."

The music of the Sirens was becoming quite loud. There was no wily Odysseus there to put cotton-wool in the ears, or lash the skipper to the mast.

"How odd it is the way fellows differ from each other ! Why can't I take things as I find them ? Why should I look below the surface, and see, or fancy I see, reality, when most other people only see what I take for a mask ?

"I suppose it is because mental faculties are much the same as physical ones. Intellectual acumen may be compared to visual capacity—the long-sighted ones can read the name of a vessel where others can hardly see the vessel at all. Some people perhaps have a mental vision of X-ray power, while others can barely attain to a blurred Kodak-like apprehension.

"This girl is sweet and pretty, undoubtedly. She has the winning coquetry of one of Rhoda Broughton's ingenuous maidens. Why should I feel instinctively that she is simply playing a part ?

"But, after all, what part ? Evidently she is fond of pleasure. If she likes to be with me, as she appears to be, ought not that alone to be flattering ? What can she hope to get by being sweet to me ? Why can't I take the good the gods provide without inquiring the why and the wherefore ? No, I will give up this wretched habit I have of analysing the motives of everyone who comes in my way. I will cultivate the easy self-complacency of Master Billy. Heigho ! I wish I could believe in disinterested and lasting affection. It's a great pity Aubrey de Vere ever wrote that bitter sonnet," and Jack murmured to himself those scathing lines, written at a time when nothing, perhaps,

could be too scorching to describe the Beauties of St. James's and Versailles :

“ If women could be fair and yet not fond,
Or that their love were firm, not fickle still,
I would not marvel that they make men bond
By service long to purchase their good will.
But when I see how frail those creatures are,
I marvel much that men forget themselves so far.”

“ It's all the fault of one's education,” Jack continued.
“ Helen and Guinevere, Semiramis and-Cleopatra, Madame de Longueville and the Countess of Shrewsbury, such are the names which occur as one recalls the ladies of the past—at least those one would like to have met. For after all, Joan of Arc and Madame Lucretia were no doubt estimable in their respective spheres, but they might have been a little heavy also at times.”

And so Jack meandered on in the pleasant paths of lazy retrospection as he paddled over the glassy sea. The stars were streaming in quavering streaks of light across the gently heaving surface. A soothing lullaby rose and sank drowsily along the sand. A distant twang of an irreverent banjo throbbed on the water, and Jack recognised the voice of Billy, who was chanting a melancholy ditty.

“ Wra—a—ap—me up in my tar—pau—lin jacket,
And say a poor buffer lies low, lies low.”

Suddenly into the midst of this harmonious tranquillity a harsh voice discordantly broke—

“ *Forget-me-not*, ahoy!” It was the screech of Mr. Meekin, whose voice was as long and thin as his person.

“ All right, Jim, I'll fetch him,” called Jack, who was close in to the entrance of the harbour by now.

"Won't you come on board, old chap?" said Billy, as the dinghy came alongside and Meekin got out.

"No, thanks, Billy, I've a few things I want to do aboard before I turn in. Good-night," and Jack paddled away to his own little craft.

* * * * *

Next morning the *Forget-me-not* was early astir. Not only was there the usual routine to be gone through, but all the rigging had to be well set up, and the running gear carefully overhauled.

By nine everything was all a-taunto, the mainsail and topsail set like boards, the jib hoisted in stops, and all was ready for slipping as soon as the Governor came on board.

There was every promise of a glorious day.

"We shall have a good breeze on the flood, but I doubt if it will hold all day, sir," said Jim. "But there's the Governor:—Aye, aye, sir! Look sharp, Tom, and put him aboard."

In another few minutes a tall, hearty-looking man, with an eyeglass, was stepping on deck.

"Jim, we'll have to pick up Sir William off Landston, so we must run down along-shore as we did yesterday."

"Aye, aye, sir. Now, gentlemen, lend a hand." This time the jib was shaken out without an accident. The moorings were thrown overboard, the yacht's sails filled, and away she went close-hauled to stem the last of the flood.

There was plenty to be done, and no one had much time to look about. The Governor steered and gave directions. Mr. Meekin worked with exemplary energy. He was quite correct to-day, in unimpeachable flannels. Billy, too, was

the complete yachting Johnnie. Both, in spite of their duties, seemed to be admiring the coast scenery with praiseworthy interest.

Jack-all-Alone, too, appeared a little pensive.

"There they are!" muttered Mr. Meekin suddenly, all smiles and fascination.

"Great Scott! Don't wave your thingummy like that, man," growled the Governor in a disgusted tone.

"There's Sir William, sir," reported Jim.

"All right. You'd better fetch him at once." The yacht was brought up head to wind and allowed to lie-to.

"I wish those girls would show a little more—well—what shall I call it?" thought Jack—"a little less obtrusiveness, eh? But she is uncommonly pretty; and how demure the little puss looks! Ah, I'm glad they've the sense to pull away. Sir William, too, seems much interested. What bad form it is the way men turn round and stare at girls! What a sell for him! They've turned their backs on him—at least Dolly has. As for that little minx Jessie, she'd out-stare a whole regiment."

It was evident the Sirens were in full blast this morning.

The dinghy had now come alongside. Tom stood ready to take the painter and help Sir William Gordon on board.

"Jolly day, ain't it?" remarked "The Boss," as the owner of the *Forget-me-not* was usually called by his yachting intimates when talking of him among themselves.

Belonging to that happy few who are born to inherit large fortunes, and with no uncomfortable sense of the responsibilities of such a condition, young William Gordon had passed through Eton and Oxford with no more dross than usually accompanies an ordinary English boy of the

comfortable sort, unilluminated by the pangs of genius or the tortures of a "future." He was blissfully ignorant of a "mission," or any other aggravating ideas of obligations to his fellow creatures.

To thoroughly enjoy himself as far as he knew how, to be as true and just to his neighbours as they could make him, to get the utmost services out of others at a minimum of cost, to patronise sport of all kinds, but only to indulge in it vicariously himself, to run as little personal risk and discomfort as possible—such were the leading tenets of Sir William Gordon's private creed.

Although by no means handsome, or even passably good-looking, this not uncommon type of the "bold Baronite" managed to obtain a certain success with the fair sex. His tailor dressed him well. His early training and associations had indelibly stamped him with the characteristics of his class. He could hold his tongue with an insolent air of half-cynical contempt, or he could pour out a brief but Stygian tide of forcible words. He could even descend to the milder fascinations of monosyllabic small talk.

Perfectly convinced of his own perfections, Sir William fully realised that he only had to smile on a girl, or perhaps had not even to take so much trouble as that when a mere stare would be sufficient, to make the happy object of such a distinction a willing slave.

Naturally every pretty girl he met had not necessarily been honoured by his attentions, and therefore some, he knew, had not succumbed to his fascinations; but this did not disturb Sir William. His self-complacency was unruffled. Uninfluenced by any deep feelings, a light-hearted cynicism was the main feature of this gilded young man's mental capacity.

Hitherto he had shown no more keen interest in the noble sport of yachting than is evidenced by those distinguished sportsmen who hang about the many Royal yacht clubs which so plentifully adorn our coasts, or who help to swell the number of the passengers on those sumptuous floating palaces which lie at anchor off Cowes during the Regatta week, and are to be found at Southampton, Plymouth, Dartmouth, Kingstown, the Clyde, Oban, and the Riviera in due season, exactly as certain moths and butterflies frequent their own especial plant or flower.

Sir William never touched the helm or handled a rope, but in the eyes of the professional yachting world he was every inch a gentleman and a true yachtsman to boot.

Sir William's yachts, however, had won him many prizes. To own yachts was a tradition of his family, and fortunately for those amateurs who really love the sport, with all its active work and excitement, no paid hand is allowed to take the helm in many Yacht Club races. In the good old days of which I am talking, no paid hand even was allowed to touch any rope or sail either during the race.

"I say, Billy, who're those girls, eh?—in that boat, eh? Thought I knew one of 'em," said Sir William.

"Friends of Meekin, I believe," replied Billy.

"Oh. Well, let's get on. We've not much time, have we, before the first gun fires?" It was a maxim of the "Boss" always to seem to direct everything. In the present instance the yacht was, as a matter of fact, doing all it could to get through the water, and the course was direct for the Committee vessel about five miles off across the bay.

Jim was employing the leisure in putting things ship-shape and handy. The spinnaker boom required much

attention. By the time all things were quite in order the *Forget-me-not* was nearly up to the Committee boat.

The breeze had freshened, and the yacht was slipping along in fine style. Every inch of canvas was stretched like a glove. The whole toppling pile of snowy sailcloth gleamed in the bright sun.

Ahead the sea was covered with craft. There were many yachts flitting about. Several were flying racing colours.

"Why, we haven't got ours up yet," said Sir William, noticing that Jim was sending up the boy with the little square racing flag, a blue and white one with a red cross in the middle.

"There's plenty of time," remarked the Governor. "We've half an hour before the first gun goes."

Meanwhile Tom had reached the topmast head. He was unshipping the truck, and lashing the yacht's colours in its place.

"That's it. Now we'll do, eh?" said Sir William, and they did.

"There's *Pet*, and *Mopsa*, and *Bow-wow*, and *Kitten*," the Governor was saying, looking at the yachts around. "We shall show them a clean pair of heels anyway. Where's *Pick-me-up*?—Oh, there she is. She looks pretty smart, too."

"Ah, now we're going to have some music," remarked Billy, as a German band on the shore set up an alarming noise. "It must be a Bank Holiday, to judge by the crowd on the beach."

"Ready about!" called out the Governor, and the handy little vessel shot up into the wind, and was off on the other tack with scarcely a shiver in the head sails.

Suddenly there blew out a puff of white smoke from the Committee vessel, followed by a sharp report.

"First gun, sir," said Jim, touching his cap.

"All right," replied Sir William. "See that yawl ahead, eh?"



THE GOVERNOR, WHO WAS STEERING.

But the Governor, who was steering, had already allowed for it, and the two smart vessels passed within almost an oar's length of each other.

"Deuced close that," said Sir William. "That fellow's fault, eh? Shouldn't have crossed our stern, eh?"

The fun was now getting thicker. The racing craft were

keeping off and on, so as to be well in hand for the start.

A quarter of an hour passed.

"There you are!" exclaimed Meekin, who was rapidly becoming excited, as he saw the white puff of smoke again blow out from the Committee vessel.

"It's the second gun, sir," said Jim.

"Jack, will you take the helm?" called Sir William.

"With pleasure," Jack replied, as the Governor gave up the tiller to the new helmsman.

"How many minutes?" asked Jack.

"Four yet."

The yachts were now drawing even closer together. One was luffing almost across the bows of the *Forget-me-not*. The tide was running strongly out of harbour. Steamboats were coming in among the yachts, to land the passengers at the pier. Small rowing-boats were everywhere. Altogether the man at the helm had plenty to exercise his judgment.

Jack had never in his life steered a Racer before. He would have liked, could he have had the chance, to practise a little first. It is so difficult to judge exactly the pace a strange craft is going, and when a few moments may make all the difference between a good and a bad start, it is as well to know all the points of the vessel one is handling.

"Keep her away, eh?" remarked Sir William, as he saw this was exactly what was being done.

"Two minutes more!" called the Governor, who was keeping the time.

Jack was anxiously watching the Committee vessel as well as the other yachts.

The breeze had freshened considerably. The lee gunwale of *Forget-me-not* was already under water. The object was to keep up to windward at just sufficient distance to bear up and run down with all the *way* on possible, so as to carry all the pace the yacht could go as she crossed the line exactly when the gun fired.

To judge this moment accurately is a nice piece of sailing. Should the yacht pass a second before the gun fires, she would have to return and cross the line again. It would be better to be a little behind than too soon.

"One minute more!" called the time-keeper.

Jack put up the helm a little and had the sheets eased.

"Thirty seconds more."

The yacht was now heading for the clear course between the Committee vessel and the shore.

Two other yachts were just abeam on the lee side.

"We must give them room to go through," said Sir William, as Jack luffed slightly.

"Fifteen seconds more!—ten!—five!—By Jove! we shall be through before that blessed gun goes off!—two!—one!—Good heavens! we've crossed it! No! there it goes!—All right!—A good start that, any way, eh, Boss?" said the Governor, as he put away his watch.

"Not bad. I think we judged it very well, eh? I told Jack to take the tiller just in time, eh?"

"Boss is going it well this morning," remarked Billy to the Governor. "I believe if he could see creation spinning along he would say it was fortunate he told the Almighty to keep it going."

"Ready about," said Jack quietly.

"Look out to get the jib sheet in smartly!" exclaimed Jim, who was enjoying his holiday immensely.

The yachts were all close together. *Forget-me-not* was to windward of the lot, and therefore leading, although *Mopsa* looked to be a little ahead to those on the shore.

With a long shoot up and scarcely a shiver of the sails, the yacht ran up into the wind and was off on the port tack, going as close to the wind as she could.

"It'll be a pretty near thing if we clear *Kitten's* bowsprit," said the Governor aside to Billy.

"He knows what he's about," replied that young gentleman unconcernedly.

Jack was keenly watching the towering pinnacle of white canvas which was rippling through the water a few yards off, threatening to run his own yacht down. As *Forget-me-not* was on the port tack, it was her business to give way to the other unless she were sure of passing.

"He's going to do it!—By Jove! We shall be into her. Ah!—well done! We've just cleared her. —*Kitten* never altered her helm at all—he must have a good nerve to take her across like that," ejaculated the Governor.

"A little too risky I call it," said Mr. Meekin, whose complexion had not been improved by the uncertainty of the last two minutes.

"Excellent bit of judgment that, eh? *Forget-me-not* is a boat any man may rely on, not like your all-things-to-all-men kind of craft one sees so often ashore."

As this was an enigmatical remark quite over the heads of the Governor and Billy, no one made any reply to Sir William, who continued complacently to smoke his cigar.

So far all was going well. The yachts were obliged to make short tacks in this narrow channel, for there were

shoals on each side, but the banks were well marked by large buoys.

"How much water does she draw?" asked Jack.

"Exactly nine feet, sir," said Jim.

Jack looked carefully under the sail.

"What's the time?" he asked again.

"12.22 precisely," replied the Governor.

"Let me see, it's high water at three," muttered Jack; and he told the Governor to ease off the main and jib sheets very slightly, while he put up the helm a little.

"I say, ain't you sailing her rather free? Look at the flag," suggested the Governor.

Jim smiled. "Let 'im alone; 'e knows wot 'e's about, sir."

The course lay well to the west. But in order to be on the safe side, the other yachts were all beating carefully down the narrow channel in order to clear the spit of sand on the west of them.

Obviously if anyone could creep across the sand bank, there would be very nearly a mile gained. But the risk was one no one else cared to take apparently.

"All the other yachts have gone about," said the Governor, uneasily.

"Have they?" replied Jack; but he still looked under the sail and held on. *Forget-me-not* was well past the black-and-white buoy marking the W. side of the deep water channel. To the others it seemed little short of madness.

"Would you like to have the lead heaved?" asked the Governor, who was getting very uneasy.

"No, I don't think so," replied Jack. "Get the sheets in again a bit. That'll do."

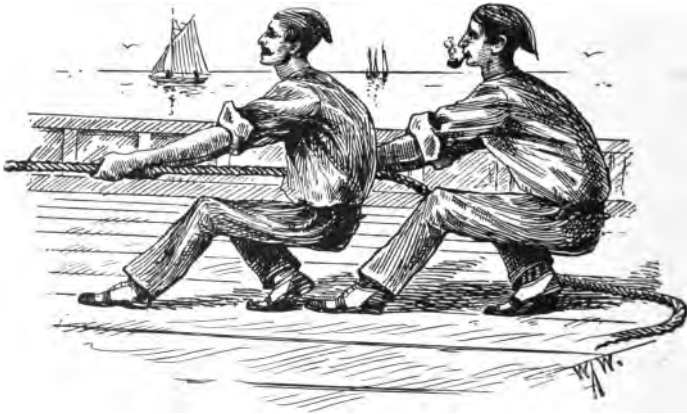
"There's *Mopsa* leading well. *Kitten's* gone about, and is evidently following our example," said Billy.

"Then I'm sorry for *Kitten*," murmured Jack.

"Why? If we've water enough, hasn't she?"

"No, not there. I'm going through a gut there is. There ought to be at least ten feet of water by now."

"Hullo! what's up with *Kitten*? She's aground. How they will curse us!" exclaimed the Governor, "and I'm blest



"GET THE SHEETS IN AGAIN A BIT."

if we are not, too!" he added in a tone of exasperation, as a dull grating noise could be distinctly heard under the keel.

"All right," Jack said, "she's going all the time; only you'd better all go forward."

The grating continued for a few seconds, growing gradually fainter, until it ceased as suddenly as it had begun.

"All right, sir!" said Jim. "We've gained a good mile and a 'arf by that."

"Too close," growled the Governor; "a little more and we should have stuck."

"Only for a minute, if that," replied Jack. "And the others can't sail a mile and a half a minute yet."

The breeze was sending the yacht along finely. The others were still making short tacks down the channel. *Kitten* was still aground, and her crew could be seen gathered in a cluster at the bows.

"That's the only way through," said Jack. "I happen to know it well, as I have pottered about here a good bit off and on."

"Lucky for us, old chap," rejoined Billy. "Those beggars had better give it up now. They'll never catch us."

"How much time allowance do we give?" asked Jack.

"There's the card. I say, we *are* handicapped. We've got to give everyone something. *Kitten* has the most; we allow her twenty minutes."

"What rot!" exclaimed Billy.

"Well, I don't think it will much matter; we're more than that ahead already, and we know we can sail better than she can. Ah, I see she's off, after all. The tide is rising fast."

By this time the other yachts had rounded the spit buoy, and were all coming down in a cluster, with sheets more easy, and all sails drawing finely in the fresh southerly breeze.

The course lay well away to the west, and it was a beam wind as far as the mark buoy.

Sir William was quite content with the excellence of his vicarious steering, and called for sherry and sandwiches.

These he digested with much relish, until he found the Governor had begun to help himself.

"I say, Jim, bring up some more for Major Macdonald."

Jim went below. Everyone watched his return with interest.

"What a deuce of a time he is down there," said Mr. Meekin. "I hope he's going to bring up a large plateful."

Presently Jim's head emerged.

"Please, sir, there ain't no more."

"Eh? Well, I can't help it. I'm very sorry, for they're doosed good. *Pâté de foie gras*," said Sir William, as he took another bite. "Daresay there's something else though, eh?"

"We're just ready to go round the mark now," suggested Jack. "Ready about!"

There was the usual exhortation from Jim to look after the sheets. A scarcely perceptible shiver of the sails, and away the yacht sped, to pass the first mark two miles or more ahead of all the other yachts.

"Pretty sailing," remarked Billy. "Now let's have some grub." In which idea Mr. Meekin fully agreed.

"Sorry, sir, but there ain't no more pervisions on board," said Jim, once more appearing at the hatchway.

"What!" cried Mr. Meekin in a distracted tone. "Bring us out here to spend all day in air keen enough to make the great mummy himself have an appetite! It's brutal, it's devilish, it really is."

"No more grub, eh? Very sorry, I'm sure," mumbled Sir William. He was munching the last mouthful. "It's that fool of a fellow Walter. Well, we're sailing so fast we shall be in soon."

"What, no lunch!" exclaimed Meekin. "It's brutal Billy, why didn't you tell me?"

"Shut up, you ass. Ain't I as hungry as you?"

"Jim, look in that hamper I brought off," called out the Governor, with a wink at Billy.

The ways of the Boss were not unknown to his intimates, and they usually provided accordingly.

The course now lay well to the southward. This necessitated a couple of boards before the next mark was rounded. It was evident *Forget-me-not* could do as she liked with the other yachts so far.

This just suited Mr. Meekin. There would be plenty of time to discuss lunch.

"Better wait till we round the next mark. We shall be able to set the spinnaker then," suggested Jack, who was eyeing the topmast critically.

"Jim, that stick has got an ugly twist in him. It's actually bending to windward. Is it sprung, do you think?"

"Humph! Don't think so, sir. It don't look quite the thing, certainly. But there ain't no great strain now—nor won't be, I'm thinking, just yet. Now then, gentlemen, it's time you got that spinnaker under way."

Meanwhile the last tack had brought the yacht back among all the pleasure boats of the little watering-place which they had passed in the morning.

Mr. Meekin consoled himself for the delay in lunch by making himself as conspicuous as he could in the eyes of the people in the shore boats.

Even Jack could not help looking out for the coquettish hat and waving hair.

"What's that fellow doing in that boat?" called out the

Governor, who was engaged in hooking on the spinnaker to the outhaul.

Jim, not being allowed to touch a rope, was giving voluble directions.

"Dunno! 'e looks to me as if 'e wanted to get run down, 'Tis beyond belief the way these Lunnoners will block up the sea. There's no gettin' clear on 'em, no more than an oyster can clear 'isself of a five finger. Hi, keep away! Can't yer see we're racing? Eh—what?"

"He wants to speak to us. All right," said Jack, who thought he recognised the man who came off to the girl's assistance the day before. "I see him."

The boat evidently was being rowed by someone who knew more about the business than most of the visitors to the seaside.

"By Jove! I believe he wants to come aboard. Yes, sir, what is it? eh—Don't you see we're racing? No, we can't take anything on board. We mayn't alter our trim. What, take that note? Oh—I don't know about that"—But the young man had already thrown a small packet on deck, and was now some yards astern.

"Who is he, eh?" asked Sir William, "and who's the note for? Don't know if we can receive it. Shall be disqualified perhaps, eh?"

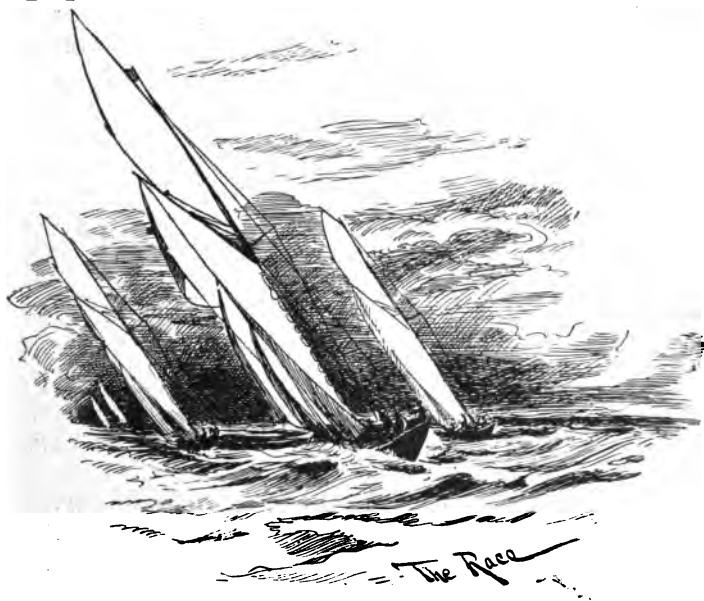
"Well, we can't give it him back again, can we? Why, it's for you, Jack!" said the Governor, picking up the little three-cornered note tied to a bit of cork. "This looks romantic."

Jack looked at the note. It was addressed in a girl's handwriting. He put it in his pocket and looked out to port.

"We shall fetch the mark now," he said. "Ready, about." And about they went.

"All ready with the spinnaker—Ease away all the sheets—Lower away the boom—out with it—Hoist! That's it."

Up fluttered the large light sail. In those days silk had hardly come into use, although some extravagant people talked about it.



Everyone was as busy as he could be for a few minutes except Jim. The boy had been sent away with the dinghy and such gear as was not required before the second gun.

"We're doin' very well," said Jim; "*Kitten's* the only one who's got a chance at all, and she ain't got much."

"Provided that topmast holds on," remarked Jack.

"Blest if they ain't forgot to hook on them preventers!" exclaimed Bill, going forward to do it himself.

"No, no, Jim; you sit down aft. We don't want to be disqualified because of you."

"Blow me if I ain't clean forgot them blessed rules. What a queer thing it be, the way you gents goes fur to make regilations just so as to bother anyone. Lor'love ye, us wouldn't be bound by 'em, not us, leastways if no one wasn't lookin', and there warn't no one to tell."

"Ah, Jim, you chaps are a bad lot, I fear; but get Mr. Wilcox to see to that preventer backstay. I don't half like the way that stick's twisting."

The sails were drawing splendidly now. Everyone was sitting as far aft as he could get, to keep the yacht's head from bearing down under the pressure of so much canvas forward.

The breeze had freshened, and the run down to the Committee vessel was a fast one.

The Governor took the time as they went through, to compare it with the times of the other yachts behind them.

"Well, I'm blest!" exclaimed Mr. Meekin. "If we haven't actually forgotten to have lunch during that run!"

"Mind over matter, my boy. Glorious effect of the noble sport of yachting. We'd so much to do; and now, come along, here's more."

The spinnaker had to be taken in again as they rounded the Committee vessel, and pretty quickly, too, for it was a gybe as well.

When all was over, and *Forget-me-not* was once more leaning over, thrashing close-hauled against the hurtling tide-rip, as the ebb blustered against the rasping breeze.

Mr. Meekin's pangs of hunger could no longer be endured. His necessities were as undeniable as Orlando's.

"We've fully half an hour to spare on *Kitten*," said the Governor. "She's our only danger, and now she hasn't a chance, for we're gaining every yard we sail."

All hands were busily engaged in attending to the inner man.

Jack was steering with a watchful eye for the mark buoy. He could not help an occasional thought for the three-cornered note in his pocket.

"Bless the little puss! What game is she up to now?" he mused. "And I wonder who that chap is who chucked the note on board. He may be her brother, only girls don't, as a rule, employ brothers on such errands. Who do they honour with that kind of work? The answer to that question might help me to decide the fellow's position. Well, naturally they would make use of a really devoted friend, one whom they could implicitly trust, while perfectly conscious how little they themselves could be trusted. There is a sweet irony in this; a sort of refinement of tyranny in making one who most loves you the means of making someone else a fellow victim. That's it! He must be an admirer of hers. Poor devil!—Hullo, though, this won't do! I'm keeping her a bit too free," and Jack paid a little more attention to the helm and the sails.

The others were fortunately too much engaged in stowing away the lunch to notice the careless way Jack was steering. Sir William, too, had still an appetite left in spite of the sandwiches, which Mr. Meekin considered deuced unfair.

"That chap is a fraud," he muttered. "He's a kind of quicksand. He absorbs everything which comes near him. Look at the way he's gorging himself with that pie! It's

beastly. I was going to have that last bit—now there's none left. It's disgusting."

"Now, then, you chaps, there's the mark. Ready about," called Jack.

"Confound it!" gasped Mr. Meekin, who was just helping himself to a fresh, stiff peg of his favourite drink. "Confound it! There's no peace, not a moment, and that egregious fraud, the Boss, never does a thing except eat. He'll finish the whole show while I'm pulling in that miserable string in front there. I've hurt my hands already over the job. It doesn't seem to me fair; the other chaps haven't got half as much to do as I have. I wonder what's in that note Jack's got. Jessie promised she'd turn up on the beach this evening, and that other girl, I've no doubt, 'll be there too. I hope Billy won't come. We'll have larks." And Mr. Meekin forgot for the moment his more immediate sorrows in the contemplation of a touching scene on the sands in the gloaming, until the jib-sheet, not being belayed quite securely, drew out, evoking a brief but forcible ejaculation from the Governor, and a smothered cry of anguish from Mr. Meekin, as the bare rope rasped his blistered hands.

"How are the others getting on, I wonder?" remarked Billy as he came aft to finish his lunch.

"*Mopsa* has pulled up a bit, she's ahead of *Kitten* now, but not enough to save her time. The breeze is freshening: that'll help us. Why, we shall be in in another half hour or so—an easy walk over."

The breeze certainly was freshening, as Mr. Meekin soon discovered. Not only did the narrow yacht lean over very much, but she began to put her head into the short sea, which soon got up with wind against tide.

"Dear me, how very unpleasant!" he spluttered, as a dash of spray drove suddenly in his face and down his neck. Besides this dampness, which was chilling enough, Mr. Meekin felt other sensations even more perturbing and uncomfortable.

"If only I can hold out until we round the next mark it will be all right!" he gasped. "Running before the wind will be smooth work."

Once more the yacht was among the pleasure parties and scudding in smoother water under the lee of the land.

"I'll take the helm now while you have a snack," said the Governor.

Nothing loth, Jack gave up the tiller and stretched himself a bit. Then he took a look round. It was quite clear that the others hadn't a chance. *Kitten* was doing well, but *Forget-me-not* was fully half an hour ahead of her, if not more.

Then he thought of the note and pulled it out of his pocket. The address was written in a pretty little hand, neat and firm, but rather school-girlish withal; he tore it open and read:

"I've been asked to sail on board the *Kitten*, so I don't suppose we shall meet this evening. If I should be back in time I'll be at the same place at nine.—DOLLY. P.S.—I hope you will win."

"There's loyalty," thought Jack. "What a darling she is! But I wonder who are her friends." Then he added aloud, "Billy, who owns the *Kitten*!"

"Tompkins. He's a bit of a bounder, one of the rowdy sort. Runs a milliner's shop, I believe. Anyhow, he always has some young people on board."

"Humph! That don't sound the sort of thing for Dolly. She seemed a cut above that. I wish she weren't quite so

——” and then Jack mused vaguely; he could not have told exactly the direction in which his thoughts did go.

Lunch, the fresh air, exciting motion, the pleasure of the race, all helped to divert his ideas from taking a too definite shape or being too cynical. Only there was under it all an uneasy feeling, a kind of resentment at the girl going for a sail with anyone else, especially with such a party as she appeared to have gone with. “But after all,” he muttered, “I never asked her to come with me; in fact, I couldn’t even if I had thought of it. Well, she wishes me to beat the *Kitten*, so I will,” and Jack strolled aft.

“Will you take the helm again, old man?” asked the Governor.

“I don’t mind,” replied Jack.

“It’s about time we got the spinnaker ready again, eh?” said Sir William, as he saw Billy and the Governor overhauling the gear.

Jack looked up at the topmast. It was looking worse than ever. If only there was time, it ought to be seen to. He felt sure it would go suddenly as soon as it felt the weight of the spinnaker.

“What do you think, Jim?”

“Don’t like the looks on it. Shall I lash a spar to it? ’Twould be some ’elp.”

“What do you say, Governor?” asked Jack.

“Let it go and take its chance.”

Jack looked doubtful. He regretted he had not sent Billy aloft. Jim couldn’t go.

They were now on the last tack to fetch the mark buoy for the final run in. *Forget-me-not* had fully ten minutes to spare over *Kitten*. There was only five miles more to sail.

"I should set the spinnaker at the cap, not hoist it at the topmast at all," suggested Jack.

This was discussed, but finally the idea was rejected and all was made ready for hoisting as the buoy was rounded.

Jack looked back at the *Kitten*. He felt much more interest in that little yacht now.

"I'm glad we stole across the sand like that," he thought; and then he remembered how the other yacht had tried to follow suit. "No doubt she made them do it. If we could why couldn't they? I can see her saying it." And Jack saw before him a pretty picture. Two saucy blue eyes, a bewitching little mouth, masses of wavy golden hair, softly rounded cheeks where the glow of health rivalled the peach's tints, a lissome but amply rounded figure.

"I say, where are you steering us to? Look out, man, or we shall foul the buoy!"

"All right," replied Jack. "I see it; I won't let the boom touch it. Are you all ready? Hoist away!" and out flew the great white sail.

The main-sheet was running out, the main-sail was swinging free before the following breeze. The buoy was twisting and surging in the breaking waves; and *Forget-me-not* flew past, with just a yard to spare between the end of the boom and the great clumsy buoy which was the southern limit of the course.

"She's spinning along now," exclaimed Billy.

"That sail is drawing—Hullo, Meekin, what's up?" But there was no need to ask—Mr. Meekin sat down.

"Why, confound it—it's worse—this way—how the beastly—boat—does—roll—oh, confound—it! oh!" and Mr. Meekin got up rather hurriedly.

But even the side of the yacht brought no relief to Mr. Meekin, for just as he was about to contemplate the sea, there was a sharp crack overhead, a cry from Jim, and down came spinnaker and topsail, topmast and topsail jib, all in the wildest confusion, narrowly escaping the head of Mr. Meekin, which was extended at considerable length over the lee channels.

"Oh—con—found—it!—what awful thing—has—happened—now?" gasped the unfortunate amateur.

"Top up the spinnaker boom!" called out Jack. "Here, take the helm, Governor. I'll go aloft and clear away that hamper. Billy, you look out down below."

Wire rigging is not the easiest thing to clear up in a hurry: it has a most objectionable way of coiling itself up and twisting round anything and everything. The sails, too, were full of the sea and were hard to pull in.

Everyone tugged; even Mr. Meekin did his best.

"We're going to win this race," muttered Jack, as he stepped up the mast hoops. "*Kitten* hasn't rounded the buoy yet, and we've still eight minutes or more to win in."

Then he set to work. After ten minutes of hard pulling and patient unravelling, the broken spar was lowered on deck, the tangled rigging was coiled out of the way, the useless sails were stowed along the deck, the spinnaker was reset at the mast-head—with a bunch at the top, it is true, but still doing plenty of work—and things looked a bit more ship-shape again.

"Here you are, Jack," said the Governor, giving up the helm. "You'd better take her through and win."

"We shall do it now, shan't we?"

"Yes, if the wind don't drop, as it seems inclined to do," replied the Governor.

"Oh, we're getting into the harbour tide: that takes some of it off. The flood's beginning to come in now."

"What time have we on *Kitten*?"

"Just six minutes yet above her allowance."

"All right," and Jack took the helm.

"I say, you've cut your hand," observed Billy.

"Have I? So I have. It's nothing; I expect a bit of the wire scratched it. Tie it up, will you, so that the blood don't stain the deck."

"We did that business well, eh?" said Sir William, slowly, while taking a few placid puffs at his cigar. "Didn't take long over that job, did we, eh?"

"Confound him!" muttered the now livid Meekin in the interludes of his paroxysms.

"He ne—ver even—moved a fin—ger to—help, and—yet—he—oh! my goodness!!!" and with mingled feelings of mental and corporeal exasperation Mr. Meekin turned to his interrupted contemplation over the side.

"How goes the time?" asked Jack, looking back at *Kitten*, which was now racing along in fine style, carrying all the breeze with her.

"We've still got five minutes to spare. We shall do it if this blessed breeze don't die right away."

Jim began to whistle.

"Shut up, Jim," growled the Governor. "We don't want to be taken for a set of stable boys."

Jack looked at the broken topmast. It had gone just at the time when it was most wanted.

The breeze was certainly dying away. Well, it would be as bad for the others as for them, provided they did not carry it on longer than *Forget-me-not* did.

"Can't we rig up a jury topmast?" suggested Billy.

"No good. We're doing all right," replied Jack, hopefully. "We've only a mile more to go."

The main sheet, however, was scarcely doing any work. The sails began ominously to rustle and shake as the yacht rolled in the short swell.

"That miserable *Kitten* is still holding the breeze," growled the Governor, more discontentedly than ever. Even Jack began to be a little less hopeful. He looked back and fancied he could distinguish a white hat and a red parasol. Evidently there was more than one lady on board.

"I'll hear all about it this evening," he thought.

"But we *must* beat them. Ah, they're losing the breeze, too."

It was true. As so often happens in fine weather, the strong breeze of the afternoon was dying away as the sun neared the west. All the yachts were now feeling the calm.

Kitten, however, being the smallest and lightest vessel, was least affected by the absence of wind.

"She's creeping up all the time. Unless that streak of wind ahead reaches us soon, we are done for," said the Governor.

"It will!" exclaimed Jack. "Look out! It's coming right ahead! In with the spinnaker! Haul in the main-sheet! Look alive!"

They were none too soon. Down came a lovely cool breeze from the north, rippling the glassy water in a long dark blue streak. So fresh and strong was it, that the loss of the topmast made no difference now.

The yacht began to go through the water gaily.

By the time all was stowed, and the decks were made ship-shape again, the distance was already reduced to a quarter of a mile, and two more tacks would end the race.

"The others haven't got it yet," said Billy, looking back. "And when they do, I shouldn't be surprised if some of them lost something, if it drops on them as strong as it did on us."

"We're still a good three minutes over *Kitten's* allowance. How wild they will be when they see us whipping along like this!" chuckled the Governor.

"Do you see all those boats ahead, eh?" asked Sir William.

"All right, I won't hurt them," replied Jack. "Ready about." And round the *Forget-me-not* came, to slip along close-hauled between the Committee vessel and the shore.

The usual crowd of boats, the discordant clang of a brass band, the grinding of a couple of barrel-organs, the cries of the vendors of sweets and cakes, the hum of an idle crowd, the throng of trippers taking their pleasure in the strange way common to their class—amidst all these sounds and scenes the stately yacht glided silent and stately, with the stump of her broken topmast a mute witness of her struggles and her excellent sailing.

Again the white puff of smoke flew out from the Committee vessel. Again the sharp report rang over the sea.

"We've done it, I do believe!" exclaimed the Governor.

"But *Kitten* may pick up her time, if she's lucky."

The *Forget-me-not* luffed round. Down fluttered her foresail. She came head-to-wind and lay-to clear of the other craft. Tom came alongside with the dinghy, his face, as usual, a broad smile.

"We've done it again, Jim, ain't us?"

"Why, in course. Leastways if *Kitten* don't save her time. Come aboard sharp, and clear away this deck

hamper. It's a mercy that there long gent weren't knocked on the 'ead. Poor bloke ! he's been bad, to be sure."

"'Oo steered?"

"Why, Mr. Jack, in course; 'e did it well, too, I will say. Never gave 'em a chance from the time 'e stole over them spit sands till he brought her in. Hullo, look at *Kitten*!"



THE GOVERNOR AT WORK.

"Wot's up?
Blest if she ain't fouled that ketch wot's at anchor."

It was too true. The smart little vessel was seen to swing suddenly round and come head to wind, lying alongside a trading vessel which had anchored off the shore.

"Run it too fine," remarked the Governor.

"Didn't allow for the strong tide runnin' in now. Well, that settles it; she can't win now, anyway."

After a considerable bother *Kitten* managed to clear her runner tackle, which had caught across the ketch's bowsprit, but when she crossed the line she was fully thirty minutes behind *Forget-me-not*, who was duly declared winner.

Mopsa arrived ten minutes before *Kitten*, but as she had to allow the latter fifteen minutes, *Kitten* took second prize.

"We sailed that race well anyway, eh?" said Sir William, who was examining *Kitten* attentively with his glasses. "By Jove! that's a fine girl on board that boat—two fine girls!—Bless me, I believe I know 'em—Confound it! why does she keep her parasol down like that, eh?—I do believe—yes—it must be—why its diving Jenny. Here, Jim, pull us a bit nearer the *Kitten*, d'ye hear, eh?"

PART III.

Omnia Omnibus.

"Landston, Dorset.

"*Thursday.*

"MY Darling Chick,—I know you are longing to hear all I've been doing since last I wrote. I would have written before only I have been so awfully busy. We're all having a ripping time. Gussie came down last week, and you've no idea what a splendid boy he is. I don't believe there's a single thing he wouldn't do if I asked him. We've been out on the sea nearly every day, and my blue serge has had to go through a good deal, I can tell you; but, as you know, this is so sweet a little place one can do and wear just what one likes. Some girls come out very smart in the afternoons and evenings, but they look very silly, and smart frocks are quite out of place in a little quiet village like this, don't you think? But I must tell you what fun I had the other day. Gussie and Bob took Jessie and me out for a row. Jessie steered, and I sat up in the front. We rowed to a lovely little bay near here

where there are woods and the deliciousest sands you ever saw, where we meant to paddle and catch shrimps. On our way we passed a pretty little yacht. Jessie said it would run us down, and was trying to get out of its way, when Gussie told her to go nearer, as he wanted to see the boat better. This flurried Jess, and as we were really very near the yacht, I got up and sat on the front part of the boat. Suddenly Gussie or Bob did something wrong; they missed the water with their oars, or something stupid like that. Jess, too, jerked to the side, and poor me, before I could do anything to save myself, was in the water. It *was* horrid. I don't know how long I was hanging over the side, but I think I saved myself very well, only Jess, who was much too frightened to do anything, says it was quite fortunate Gussie and Bob were sitting with their backs to me; but then she always says nasty things, and that lovely frilling I bought at Marshall and Snelgrove's makes up so sweetly, and those brown stockings are perfectly beautiful. Jess has been cross ever since she saw them. But all this time I was hanging over the side, I suppose, when I felt myself caught hold of. Such a pull I never felt before. It was awful; and when I recovered my senses I found I was in a little boat with a tall man, very sunburnt and a little wild-looking, with bright blue eyes and rather a stern expression. Of course I felt horribly frightened; besides, I was soaking wet, and my wrists were hurting. Jess says he caught hold of my ankles, too, and pulled me in by one ankle and one wrist.

"We didn't talk much—indeed, he seemed in a great hurry to put me into our boat again. I tried to thank him, but what with the wet things, and the pain in my ankle, back, and wrist, and the horrid salt water down my throat,

I couldn't be very nice, could I? So I sat and shivered until he went alongside Gussie's boat, and I climbed out. Then he rowed away after his yacht, which, it seems, he had left to take care of itself while he came to pick me up. When he had gone, of course I felt I had been very rude, and never really thanked him for the trouble he had taken; for it was, of course, quite too brave and kind of him to leave his own boat and come to save me, wasn't it?

"Of course Jess made very light of it all and laughed at me for being so silly as to tip over like that; but how could I help it? You know it reminded me of that other time when you and I were at Southsea, when we met that delightfully wicked Sir William Gordon, and——Oh, I say! talking of that reminds me that I've met him again. Really Gussie is too sweet. You know I told you—no, I don't think I have yet—well, I've had so many things to think of lately I am afraid I am writing you a very confused letter; but what I wanted to say was that in the evening I caught sight of the little yacht going back, and I ran down to the shore where a point juts out into the sea, and was able to wave my hand to the kind savage, and call out to him that I was really very much obliged for his picking me out of the water. I never said a word about the red mark round my ankle and wrist, where he held me so tightly, but they both hurt a little all the same. He didn't come ashore then, because, he explained, he was going further on, but he said he hoped to call and meet me next day. As he seemed a little vague and quite different to Gussie and Bob, and forgot to ask where I lived or fix any time when he could see me, I had to tell him; but I was rather surprised he didn't come and talk to me then, only the ways of wild men are, no doubt, different to

those of such tame creatures as we meet in the select circles of Maida Vale, and, strange as it may appear, I think he was a little shy.

"I am afraid he was too far away to see that sweet white serge and the love of a hat you and I bought the last day we were in town together. Do you remember, when we and Reggie—— But of course you do, so what's the use of asking.

"Well, next day, while Jess and I were rowing about in the morning, whom should we see but the very same man on board a splendid racing yacht. There were a lot of other men on board, too, and of course Jess wanted to see the yacht a little closer. This very nearly led to another accident, for the stupid man who was steering knew so little about it that he almost ran us down. In fact, he did run up against our oars, and Jess was quite upset. Poor dear! It *was* a shock to her pride. She fell completely over, and one of the horrid wretches in the yacht was so rude as to lean over the side and pretend to try and jump into our boat to help us. However, that evening I met the Bogey Man, who, I must say, is quite nice, only he is so distant and curious in his manner. I never met anyone like him. Sometimes he says the nicest things in the most unexpected way, and then he will suddenly break off and make the nastiest remarks about girls you ever heard. I must confess, however, that they are generally true of most girls, but I do hope he doesn't think I am like the majority.

"I can't tell you half the pretty things he said, but I can see he is delightfully poetical and romantic, a sort of Hamlet and Don Quixote dashed with a good deal of Don Juan and a spice of Ignatius Loyola. There! don't you think I

am rather clever in remembering all those people's names and bringing them in so neatly? But I am afraid he is very poor, and that, you know, is a serious defect, as we have often agreed when we have talked about our 'eligible futures.'

"However, when we parted under the trees by the shore I will confess I felt truly a deep interest in this strange, lonely man. He exercises quite a fascination over me in a way I can't understand, as he is not at all handsome, although he is interesting and manly-looking. But his eyes are remarkable; they change so, sometimes looking quite fierce, and then becoming so blue and deep, with all sorts of lurking meanings in them that make me feel as I have not often felt before, and this frightens me rather, for I really think he can mesmerise or hypnotise.

"Gussie is quite the sweetest boy I know. He came out to help us directly after he saw that stupid man on the yacht had run into us, and then he introduced me to a "chappie," as he called him, who had another yacht which was going to race against the one my Bogey Man raced in yesterday.

"But the funniest thing is that Sir William Gordon is down here, and after the race I met him. I thought I saw him going on board the *Forget-me-not*—the name of the yacht which nearly swamped Jess and me, you know. I wish now I had not seen him—at least, it is a pity that foolish boy Jack is so ridiculously jealous. Why can't he be like Gussie? And I am sure he has not half the cause that dear boy has to be so unreasonable. How would he, I wonder, have liked it if I had asked him to take a note out for me and give it to another man on board a yacht? Yet that is exactly what Gussie did for me, and never even made a sarcastic remark or uttered a remonstrance, although I am sure the note was innocent

enough, and only told Jack I was on board another yacht which was racing, and hoped that his yacht would win, which it did; for I will say that Jack steered splendidly, taking a short cut over some sands, and when I suggested that we should follow his lead, the 'chappie,' who was steering, actually ran us on the ground, and there we stuck hopelessly, while all the other yachts went sailing by. It was most provoking, as if he had done as I asked him at once we should very likely have won the race, or at least have kept so near the *Forget-me-not* that we could all have seen each other, and you know how smart I look in that white skirt and pink shirt with those cuffs and collar we both liked so much. I was wearing my new sailor hat, too, and had on that new navy blue serge jacket, which fits deliciously. How I wish you had been there, my darling Chick! You would have enjoyed it. The 'chappie,' too, was quite amusing. He was not refined, or romantic and mysterious, like Jack. But we had a lovely champagne lunch, with the most delicious lobster salad and meat pies with those black things in them, you know, which pigs find, I think—I can't remember their names—oh, yes, I can: truffles, of course! Then there was a quite perfect tipsy cake and the most heavenly little glasses of liqueurs.

"Altogether I enjoyed myself immensely. There were several other men, friends of the 'chappie,' who is, I believe, a stockbroker, and also three or four girls. I got on very well with the men, but the girls were quite too impossible. How odd it is that men never seem to have any taste—at least, perhaps I oughtn't to say that, for they certainly didn't seem to notice the others much. There was a terrible old lady, too, who, however, soon subsided

under the combined effects of the sea and the other luxuries.

"Of course I was sorry we could not catch up *Forget-me-not*, but then I was glad, too, for I really wanted her to win.

"Towards the end of the race something very exciting happened. The wind suddenly became quite strong, and as we were eagerly watching *Forget-me-not*—at least I was, for one of the men, seeing how much interest I took in the race, was steadying my arm as I looked through the glasses, and talking most absurdly all the time—I saw half the mast break right off, and all the sails went tumbling into the water. It was most frightful, for all the boat seemed to become instantly a wreck. My hand shook so violently I could not hold the glass; and the man was so kind, he looked after me most attentively, and seeing that I could not keep the glasses steady, took them himself, and told me all that was going on. I can't tell you how sympathetic he was when I told him I knew someone on board. He told me there was a man going up the mast; he described him, and although I can't say he was very complimentary to poor dear Jack, I didn't mind when I knew he was admiring the brave way in which he was remedying the accident. In a wonderfully short time all was put tidy again, and really, unless I had seen the crash, I should not have known anything had happened.

"Of course, however, we were gaining fast, and the sweet old 'chappie,' who was really becoming a little too merry and confiding—so much so that I was glad Jess was not there—took the handle which turns the boat. This was unlucky, as he would keep on talking to me, and in spite of my nice friend, whom the others called 'Darkie'—

though why I could never understand, for he was so fair as to be almost an albino—in spite of his trying to make him see that he should attend to what he was doing, we suddenly ran into another boat which was right in our way. There was that excuse, certainly. In fact, I should have said the other boat ran into us, only it was anchored, I was told, but it looked exactly as if it was moving, for the water was running past it very rapidly.

“After a great deal of trouble, and, I really am ashamed to say, some screaming from two of the other girls, we got free at last, but we lost the race, of course.

“The most interesting event has to be told yet, however. I mentioned that Sir William Gordon was on board the *Forget-me-not*. As we passed quite close to the yacht, we all had a good look at each other, and of course I could not help smiling at my interesting Bogey Man.

“You know how Sir William stares. Well, I suppose he suddenly recognised me, for I heard him make what sounded like a very naughty remark, and then he took off his cap and made me a most comprehensive bow. Jack, too, raised his cap. He looked very tired, poor boy, and I did not think he seemed so pleased to see me as he ought to have been ; but then that is his way, and I think he is either very proud or very shy.

“I could see, however, that he had got my note, which that sweet thing, Gussie, had thrown on board somehow. There was very little time left to sail about, even if I had wanted to, as the steamboat was just leaving for Landston. Sir William very kindly offered to put me on board as he was rowing past in his boat, and as he was returning by the same steamer he escorted me home.

“I must say I thought Jack might have had the sense to

have come, too, but he preferred sailing back. Sir William made himself quite charming, and it is arranged that I am to bring Jess for a picnic next week, and go for as many sails as I like on his yacht. By the time we reached our house we were great friends, and it was a little late before I went for a stroll along the shore, where I had promised to meet Jack.

“Do you know the horrid monster never turned up. He sent over an odious long creature, the same who had leered so horribly at Jess the day she was upset in the boat, and who, with a dear little fat man, had come over that same evening and went on most ridiculously with Jess, and tried to do the same with me, only, of course, I couldn't stand that. Well, this prolonged individual said that he had come over to explain—what, I confess, was fairly beyond my comprehension. There was much about the weather and the race, and how delighted he was that we were not hurt the other day, but very little about Jack and a great many spiteful remarks about Sir William. Then the wretch began to pay me the most unveiled compliments and really had the impudence to make love to me. His name is Meekin, and I hear he is very rich, an only son, and very well connected. When I told him I was going to sail with Sir William he became much more polite in his remarks about our ‘noble friend,’ as they say in the papers, and I shouldn't be surprised if I have added one more ‘scalp’ to my seaside collection.

“But what a letter I am writing you, my darling Chick. I hope you will be quite grateful and send me all the news you can scrape together. I suppose you are having a ripping time, too, and I can imagine you at Southsea, enjoying yourself quite too delightfully.

! "Heigho! I wish that mis—mis—oh, dear, whatever is the word?—that woman-hating and morose old thing, Jack, hadn't been so absurdly jealous, for I know it was all that which prevented him coming over, and of course that horribly wicked Sir William has been telling him all sorts of preposterous stories about you and me, and really, between us, he could tell a few about someone we know, couldn't he? But there! I am too tired of writing, and it is just possible you may be of reading, only I know how you love to get my letters, so, with fondest love and hoping to hear from you soon,

"Believe me, your most devoted,

"Affectionate, and rather perplexed pet,

"DOLLY.

"P.S.—I fully expect that Meekin creature will propose at the first opportunity. What fun! Shall I give him the chance? But, seriously, don't you think 'Lady Gordon' would sound rather nice? How I do wish that Jack had a title and wasn't so impossibly poor. Why is it all poor people are so proud? Well, good-night, darling. Tell me if you see any really sweet and original ideas in costumes or things."

Cruise VII.

Taffy was a Welshman. Taffy was a—
Company Promoter."

"**L**OOK here, old chap; you're fond of yachting, and like an adventure."

"Yes," I said tentatively, for my friend Smithers was a "business man," and very good at that, and I had lately learnt, from being somewhat behind the scenes, a little what that meant. "What's up now?"

"Why, look here; I've got a yacht over at Calais. She's been there for a year or more, and I want to get her across the Channel. Will you go and bring her?"

I was sick of the office and longed for a little sea air. I longed to be once more on the briny, and the suggestion seemed an excellent one. I asked a few questions, and as these were answered satisfactorily I consented to start.

"There are all the papers. If there's any difficulty see the lawyer and broker, whose names you'll find on this memo., and wire to me if you want any further help."

That evening saw me on my way to Dover, encumbered with as little impedimenta as possible, and wondering much on the chances of the cruise.

I had learnt a little before starting, but I surmised more as I turned over the points of my information.

It appeared that my friend had advanced a considerable sum of money on the security of this vessel to assist an acquaintance out of a pressing difficulty. The difficulty had not disappeared, but the money had, and by a curious coincidence the yacht was lying in a foreign harbour, where the acquaintance had ended his cruise instead of returning to an English port.

Smithers told me he had sent over various professional skippers to bring the yacht back, but that none of them had been successful so far. "They can't talk the language, or else don't know how to go to work."

When I heard this I gathered there might be difficulties unconnected with navigation, so I suggested that before I took over any men—for the yacht was a steam vessel of about seventy tons—I had better reconnoitre a bit, and see how the land lay.

It was agreed that I should see the vessel, and find out all I could about the possibilities of removing her; and then, if I judged it practicable, I was to wire for an engineer and a mate, and ship what hands I thought were wanted to bring her over to Southampton. My only authority for claiming the vessel was a bill of sale. I had no register, no key to open the cabin if she were locked up, and no idea what state the engines might be in, or as to the state of the vessel. I was untroubled by doubts, and never thought of such difficulties as unseaworthiness, a leaky hull, or defective machinery. I had never been to Calais in my life, had never navigated the English Channel except from Cowes to Havre and down to Lulworth from Bembridge, knew absolutely nothing of a steamboat, and had never been in charge of any craft bigger than my old *Undine*, of about five tons.

The adventure, therefore, promised to be exciting, and was likely to provide plenty of novelty. There was an air of "cutting out" about it which fascinated me, and besides, I felt I was attempting a noble action. I was trying to save my friend from what appeared to me the very officious conduct of one whom he had benefited. I was still young in experience, and readily believed what a friend told me. I have learnt many things since then.

It is always more prudent to hear both sides of a question, but it is not always advisable. Many profound beliefs which have influenced mankind for weal or woe might have been less potent factors in the world's history if the absolute truth concerning them were known. Enthusiasm and credulity are perhaps more powerful agencies in proportion to the ignorance which attends upon them. I was enthusiastic in my friend Smithers' cause, and entirely incredulous as to the possibility of there being another aspect of the matter.

I arrived at Calais too late to take any steps that night, but next morning I was up early. I had determined on the course I would pursue, and in accordance with my scheme, I called first on the broker. I had never been in a shipbroker's office before. The "Courtier"—for so I found the professors of this branch of the shipping business are called—was a dapper little Swede. His office was mostly filled by a huge Swedish or Norwegian sea-captain, but in the angles unoccupied by his too exuberant figure a clerk or two managed to carry on his scribbling.

I explained my business, showed my letter of introduction, and was told I had better call on the Capitaine du Port. One of the oppressed clerks was put at my disposal, and I went out to find this important official.

The poor clerk, who was slowly assuming his ordinary proportions now that he was released from the neighbourhood of his too expansive compatriotic giant—for he too, I discovered, was a Norwegian—seemed to know his way about, and we were soon climbing the dingy stairs which led to the harbour master's office. A tap at the door, followed by a faint "Entrez," obtained admittance to a still more dingy room. The harbour master was at home, and to him I stated that I came for an English yacht now lying in the New Basin. He bowed and replied politely, "Certainly, but has Monsieur the papers?"

I said "Yes," and asked what dues there were to be paid.

This produced a marked geniality of manner. I was asked to be seated while the clerk was ordered to look up the entries.

The yacht had been there a year nearly. Nothing had ever been paid on her. I was afraid what the charges would amount to, and watched the clerk taking a long piece of paper. After a few minutes he handed the Capitaine du Port the account. The old gentleman put on his spectacles and examined the figures, then he handed the document to me.

"That is it, Monsieur."

I glanced at it. The total was about ten francs, I believe. I passed it on to the broker's clerk, who, after examining it, said the figures were all right, and I asked him to be so good as to pay it for me. To my surprise he complied at once.

The Capitaine du Port then receipted the bill and told me he hoped I should have a pleasant voyage. I was a little surprised, for all had gone so smoothly, and I thought it better, as the old man appeared so friendly, to ask him

what step I should take in order to obtain possession of the vessel.

"Monsieur has nothing to do but to go on board, since he has discharged all the port obligations."

"But supposing I am opposed by anyone?"

"Ah, truly, if Monsieur thinks there is such a possibility, then he had better consult an *avocat*."

I asked him if he could recommend me one, and he mentioned the lawyer whose name had been already given me in London.

I thanked him, bowed, and retired.

Then I went to find the man who was supposed to have charge of the yacht. This was a more difficult matter, as Calais, although not a large town, is not by any means well laid out, and seemed to be in a very transitional stage at that time. If Calais of the present day at all resembles Calais when Edward III. besieged it, I can well understand its citizens preferring to leave it at any price. I used to think Bernardin de St. Pierre and his fellow burghers great heroes: now I see why they preferred hanging to staying at home. It might even be worse than reading Guicciardini's account of the siege of Pisa.

After a long search I found the house. The man who had the key of the yacht was at home. When I stated my business he ceased to be amiable; in fact, he became distinctly hostile. He refused point-blank to give up the key, and in spite of my showing him my title in the shape of the bill of sale, he became almost abusive, and told me if I went on board or attempted to remove her it would be at my peril.

Seeing how very impracticable this person was, I thought I had better see the twice-recommended lawyer. I found

him, too, at home. It is curious, now I come to think of it, how I found everyone at home. This speaks well for the morality of the town. Evidently the citizens of Calais are not a gadabout folk. In fact, I can't see where they can "gad" to, which perhaps detracts from their meritorious domestic habits.

The lawyer was a smart man. As I unfolded my business I discovered that he was also the lawyer for the acquaintance whose money had not been forthcoming when Smithers wanted it. However, as I explained matters, and delicately hinted that the former gentleman was in no condition to discharge any of his obligations, and that my friend Smithers was, his countenance assumed a more benevolent expression while I put before him the iniquity of the wrong done to my confiding but rich friend Smithers. He frowned at the mention of the name of his previous client, and finally asked to see the papers.

I don't think he understood much English. However, after a careful examination of the bill of sale he paused, and then suddenly exclaimed :

"Mais, mon Dieu ! qu'est ce que c'est. Seexty forre, seexty forts ! C'est tout n'est ce pas ?"

I thought it better to agree, and said, "Certainly," although I, in my turn, was equally puzzled to know what he was driving at, for I had never read the bill of sale, and knew nothing of shipowning or broking jargon.

"Mais, Monsieur, you 'ave noting to do but to take de sheep. It is yours. Voilà ! C'est tres simple."

And so, indeed, it seemed. I asked him what I should do if there were any opposition.

"Com to me. But dere vil be none."

I thanked him, and was going away when I suddenly

remembered it might be better to ask the extent of my obligations to him.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Ce n'est rien. Le Courtier 'e vil see to dat. 'E represent M. Smithers."

And so I was bowed out. Things seemed going very easily. However, I thought I would just call on the harbour master again and tell him what I had done.

I found the old gentleman quite affable, and he bid me not mind what the unaccommodating possessor of the key of the yacht said, but, fortified by my consciousness of right, go boldly on board and take her away.

I confess I was astounded to find all so pleasant and agreeable. I then went to the docks. The yacht was lying close to the entrance gates. She looked very dingy and unseaworthy. I went on board. She was quite deserted. I pushed at the fore-hatch. I found it slid back at once; there was no fastening. I looked inside. It smelt very fusty.

I clambered down the iron ladder. By the dim light of the open hatch I saw that the yacht could be explored everywhere. I passed into the engine room. Being no judge of machinery, I could only hope all was right in spite of the neglected look of everything. Then I went into the saloons. Here desolation was too conspicuous. There were no curtains, no upholstery, no carpet. The sleeping cabins looked even more wretched.

I returned on deck. At any rate, I could take possession. Then I went back to the Terminus Hotel and wired:

"All right; send men night boat."

At midnight I met the steamer. Two men were among the passengers whom I guessed were the men I wanted.

They went up to the hotel, and I found my surmise was correct. One was an engineer, the other was second mate of a tramp steamer.

I told them about the state of the yacht. They looked dubious, but, like sensible men, forebore giving any opinion before they saw her. I explained exactly what I wanted. They promised to be up early and to make a thorough examination in the morning.

About nine, as I was shaving, there was a knock at my door. I opened it, and found the lanky engineer standing outside.

"Well," I said, "is it all right?"

"Don't know yet, sir. But they're openin' the dock gates. Couldn't we get her out at once? Then if all was right we could slip out when we liked."

"All right," I answered. "Go down and do all you can until I come."

Then I finished dressing and went to the gates. The pontonniers were working the handles.

"I am going to take that vessel out," I said.

"Bon, bon! but where is the permis?"

"What permis?" I asked. "The Capitaine du Port said I could take her when I liked."

"Possibly; but Monsieur can produce his permis."

I saw it was a case of the harbour master again, and I ran as fast as I could to his office, for no time was to be lost. The gates only remain open for a short time at high tide.

Mercifully the excellent harbour master was at his post. I hurriedly explained my difficulty. The dear old man, without a moment's hesitation or question, wrote on a slip of paper in pencil a few words. He gave it me with a

benignant air and bid me hasten back, as the gates would be closed directly.

I found the chef pontonnier just preparing to wind up the sluice gates. I gave him the harbour master's note.

"Bien, Monsieur will just have time to pass through!"

I went at once on board the yacht, which was already close up to the dock gates. We ran out a warp to the bollard head outside, and were soon passing clear of the outer wall. The heavy gates closed behind us. The first part of our voyage was begun. At any rate, the yacht had only the open sea before her.

But as I looked at the yacht I confess I felt some misgivings.

After we had made fast to the S. wall, I questioned the men as to what they thought.

The engineer said the "hengines was in a horful state."

The mate said "she leaked like a sieve."

"All right," I replied. "Do all you can to get her fit to cross the Channel, and let me know when we can start."

Then I went back and had a comfortable breakfast. In spite of the men's discouraging remarks I felt quite hopeful. All had succeeded very well so far.

After breakfast I strolled round to see how the men were getting on.

"All right, sir. I think we can get the pipes clear. But the boiler's in a beastly mess."

"Do you want much coal?" I asked.

"About nine or ten tons will do."

Whether this was a large or small amount I did not know. I went to my friend the Courtier and ordered the necessary quantity. There I learnt that all the stores,

upholstery, sails, gear, etc., were at the warehouses of the Douane.

After another search I found these in a courtyard at the land end of the town. I made my demand, and asked if anything had ever been paid for storing the goods.

Of course nothing had been. I at once said I would discharge all the claims if I could remove the things.

The Brigadier of the Douaniers became quite cheerful, and promptly consented to anything I liked. He even told me where I could get a cart, and by four o'clock that afternoon I had the satisfaction of seeing the smoke issuing from the funnel and the furniture and gear all going on board.

Matters were going excellently.

By ten that night the engineer came to me and said he had got the engines to go. We could start next morning at high tide.

Then I went out to find two deck hands. I was told of two likely men, but they were both in bed. However, I left word for them to come and see me early next morning.

I turned in that night satisfied beyond my most hopeful anticipations. I had only arrived the day before, and now the yacht was out of dock, steam was up, and all her stores and gear were on board. We could actually start next day.

That night it blew very hard. I was up early and walked to the end of the pier. The waves were coming in heavily. A nasty cross sea was breaking all across the entrance. The wind was strong from W.N.W. But I resolved at all hazards to clear out of Calais, for I expected every moment a wire to come from Smithers' insolvent acquaintance which would put some obstacle in the way of our taking the yacht out of port.

When I returned to the hotel I found two French fishermen standing outside.

One was very short and square, the other long and lean. Both were as unshaven and weather-stained as their class usually are. Both wore sabots, dirty blouses, and a round kind of tailless Scotch bonnet. Both were smoking short pipes, and indulged freely in what Dickens describes only too minutely in "Martin Chuzzlewit," when treating of American habits.

I found both men willing to go, provided their passage back was paid. Their terms were moderate, I thought, and I soon engaged both men. Then I went to breakfast with a contented mind, for now I really did see success before me.

As I ate the tasty omelette and drank the *café au lait*, I could see the steam coming out of the escape pipe, and I saw that the tide was nearly high.

By ten the yacht's boat came over for my kit, and I went on board.

"It's blowin' very 'ard outside," said the mate.

"I know it's a bit fresh," I replied. "But we can see what it's like. Is all ready?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have the men come on board?"

"Only one, sir."

"Why, where's the other?"

"Don't know. Ain't seen nothin' of 'im."

I had the "crew" called aft. It was my short, square friend. He took off his cap respectfully.

"Well, where's your comrade?" I asked.

"Can't say, Monsieur le Capitaine."

"Isn't he coming?"

"Je n' sais pas, Monsieur le Capitaine."

This was awkward. The tide was now high. Steam was up.

I asked the mate if he would mind going with only one hand. He said no, he didn't care, "one Frenchee more or less didn't make no odds to him."

"All right, then, let's cast off."

There was a douanier on the quay. He seemed put there purposely to watch us. I wondered if at the last minute any difficulty would occur. I longed to hear the screw revolving.

I went to the wheel. I may as well own I had never steered by wheel before. However, it would never do to acknowledge this. I turned the wheel round, and wondered which way the rudder was going.

"Well, I shall soon find out," I thought.

"Cast off," I called.

The warps were lifted over the bollard heads. The screw began to turn; we moved slowly away from the quay. There were no craft in the way, and I cautiously began to experiment with the rudder. My luck did not now desert me. The yacht's head paid off exactly in the direction I wanted.

As we steamed down the long harbour the swell came in heavier and heavier. I knew the tide was setting cross-wise through the open wooden piles, and kept well up to the thwart stream.

By the time the piers were cleared we were pitching nose under. The screw was well out of the sea every other minute, "racing" wildly before it struck the water again.

I steered for Cap Grisnez, for I thought there was a little shelter along the shore to the east of this bold headland.

The sea was heavy, much bigger than I had anticipated. The tide, too, was still going to the E., so that it would be worse presently when the stream turned.

The yacht behaved very well, and I found steering with a wheel quite easy. The little vessel was rigged with three pole masts, but no halyards or gear were rove. I had suggested the advisability of having the sails bent in case of accidents, but the mate and the engineer pooh-poohed the idea.

As we drew farther from the land the sea became very nasty. The sky looked wild, and it was evident we were in for a downright dusting.

The mate had not appeared since we cleared Calais piers. The little sturdy Frenchman was dodging the waves forward as well as he was able. Cap Grisnez was about three miles off on our port beam. Calais looked a mere collection of cottages half submerged in the sea, above which the tall lighthouse and church steeple towered in disproportionate height.

Away in the W. and N. and E. there was nothing but a tumbling, breaking sea, a grey and storm-torn sky. No sail was visible anywhere. We were the only thing afloat, apparently, and our progress was not very rapid; the heavy seas struck the little vessel and smothered her. The little Frenchman ducked and bobbed as he saw the cataract coming. The screw raced or jerked as the stern lifted or sank, and I steered for mid-Channel and to the north of the Varne on a straight course for Beachy Head.

For the last few minutes it seemed to me we were going very slowly. I found much more helm was required than before. Suddenly the screw ceased to revolve. The vessel became unmanageable; she no longer answered her helm.

The Frenchman looked round. I called to the mate. A pale face, green almost, and livid, emerged from the companion ladder.

"The engines is broke down."

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"Somethin' up with the condenser. The supply pipe choked."

"Can't it be remedied?"

"Don't know. The engineer is that bad he can't stand."

"Oh, that's it, is it? Well, get up the sails."

Then I addressed the Frenchman and told him to go below and bring up all the gear he could find.

Meanwhile we were rolling horribly. The sea was doing what it liked with us. We wallowed in the trough of the waves and rolled gunwale under. I thought of all manner of expedients in case the sails could not be bent.

Presently, however, my little Frenchman appeared. He staggered on deck with a bundle of sails. The mate was quite prostrate. The Frenchman and I had to do all the work.

When the sails were unfolded they turned out to be only leg of mutton or jib headers. The Frenchman swarmed up the foremast and rove the fore and stay-sail halyards; I performed the same office for the mizzen. Then we hoisted the head sails, and to my great joy I found the yacht began to pay off, and very slowly to answer her helm. Then we set the mizzen and main sail, and the pace became more rapid.

It was now six o'clock in the afternoon. I resolved to make for Calais. Under the light canvas we could set, I did not think it prudent to attempt to cross the Channel to Dover with so strong a wind setting right on the Goodwins.

The yacht steered easily, and the motion became less violent.

The little Frenchman took everything happily. I found him quite a comfort; as for my mate and engineer, I saw nothing of them.

Leaving the Frenchman to steer, which he seemed thoroughly able to do, I went to the engine-room. Both men were quite prostrate. They said it was sea-sickness: perhaps it was. I suggested that now the boat was going so much easier, it would be a good thing to try and get the engine to work again, because with the very slight amount of sail on her, I should not like to try entering Calais harbour, especially as it would be dark and the tide falling.

At any rate, the anchor and chain must be cleared in case we had to let go.

The mate roused himself with difficulty. The engineer said he would do all he could. I saw that the only man I could really count on was my sturdy little dirty Frenchman.

It certainly was trying down below. The sloppy deck and heavy following seas, with the rush of the damp wild wind, was better than the fetid air in the engine-room.

I found my cheerful little friend steering admirably, but that chain and anchor must be made ready, so I sent him forward to see to it. The noise overhead apparently acted as a stimulant on the mate. His livid face appeared once more at the fore hatch, and presently the rest of him followed. But I almost wished he had stayed below, for he staggered about in such an alarming way I fully expected to see him go overboard, and as it would have been my duty to bring him back again, I much preferred he should stay on the ship.

The sea was wild, the wind, if anything, was stronger. We were still about two miles off Calais. The west-going tide was now setting down strong. Unless the engines could be made to work I could not attempt to enter the pier heads with such slow steerage way and little motive power as the small jib-headed sails afforded. I called the mate aft. He came with difficulty.

"Is all ready for letting go?" I asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Can the engines be made to work, do you think?"

"I don't know, sir. The engineer is that bad."

"Can you and the Frenchman be of any use?"

"We can see."

"All right, then, make an effort, as it will be very risky to bring up outside in this sea and wind."

They went below and I was left in sole charge of the helm and the deck. No other sail was in sight. Calais was looming grey and sodden under the heavy wind-torn clouds. The Phare was already lit up and beginning to sweep round sea and land, with its huge wheel of some twenty-mile spokes of light. The pier-head lights were twinkling out in the sea. What a dreary shore it all is! Europe for the next hundred miles or so is very lowly indeed. From Cap Grisnez to Jutland there is little land which is not mostly defended from the sea by either sandhills or artificial dykes. The highest things are the lighthouses and church spires. Yet what a land of strife this scarcely saved sea-sodden soil has ever been! Perhaps no country which has a history at all has seen so many battles, sieges, and commotions as this land of Flanders. As I steer the disabled ship in the rapidly increasing darkness, thoughts of another wild night come into my mind.

The low coast is scarcely visible. The roadstead is crowded with craft—unwieldy, lumbering hulks, powerful but awkward, like wooden castles queerly fitted with fantastic spars and masts. There is a “keen and eager wind” blowing freshly on shore, causing all the vessels to roll and wallow in the short sea. Lights twinkle over the water; boats appear and disappear as they toss into a momentary gleam of some lantern swinging above the lofty gallery at the stern of a towering galleon.

Suddenly above the swish of the waves and the creaking of the yards, the strange cry of human terror moans in the darkness—inarticulate panic, blind voices of ignorant imaginings, wild fear of an unknown horror.

Away to sea there is a glare in the gloom. Out of the darkness speeds a glowing, flaring fire, a furnace which seems to walk like a spirit of scorching destruction over the water. Strange; awful; unnatural; a fire which uses the very element most hostile to itself as a path to speed it on its way.

What is it? Who sends it? What magic invented by the Evil One is now swooping down to blast the ships of the navy of his most Catholic Majesty of Spain?

It is indeed a fearsome sight, that glowing mass speeding before the wind, whence ever and anon crackling sounds break forth, sputterings and boomings as of cannon and other devilry. A veritable fire demon stalking over the sea—no marvel the——

“The engines is nearly right now, sir.”

“Eh?—Oh, all right! can we get any work out of them yet?” I answered, suddenly recalled from the days of the Great Armada to the somewhat uncertain and quite uncomfortable present.

"Not yet, sir; in another 'arf hour Bill says as 'ow he can get a twist on that 'ere screw which will fetch her along."

"The sooner the better; but I am afraid it will be too late. We are nearly upon the piers now."

"They can't work yet, not for some little while, I know," answered the disconsolate mate.

"Then we'll bring up as much under the lee of the pier-heads as we can," I said.

"There ain't much water there," growled the mate, lugubriously.

"I know, but what else can we do? It's better than out in the open channel, and I don't want to go on to Dunkirk or Ostend."

"Not if I knows it! All right, sir, I'll let go as soon as you says it."

It was now quite dark. The wind was fresh, but not quite so strong as it had been. There was a certainty of more, however, as the tide rose. Calais lights were close to us on our starboard. The long rays of the Phare kept wheeling round the horizon. The sea was leaping angrily behind us.

We had passed the entrance to the harbour. I steered so as to obtain all the shelter I could. I dared not go in any closer; indeed I was already in less water than I ought to have been with safety.

"Let go!" I called, and away the anchor rattled. The chain paid out, the bows came up to the sea, and we were riding to the heavy sea. Everything now depended on our ground tackle. To be riding disabled off a lee-shore, in an open roadstead, and with a heavy sea tumbling all along the sands, which are slowly growing nearer and nearer, is a situation picturesque, no doubt, from an artistic point of

view; but for those on board a vessel so placed, the attractions are less obvious. Even the most enthusiastic æsthete would feel his ardour cool under these circumstances.

As a subject for an additional plate in Turner's "*Liber Studiorum*" nothing could be better. As a matter of personal comfort few positions could offer less charm.

It was very dark. The sea, foaming and breaking all round, leaped into ghastly vividness as the long weird rays of the lighthouse fell upon its crests. I could hear the breakers thundering on the shallows.

The men were all below. The engineer had never appeared from the time of leaving Calais until now. The mate evidently preferred the warmth of the engine-room to the more varied experiences of the deck. The sturdy little Frenchman was enjoying a well-earned snooze.

For me the cabin had few attractions. Everything was in disorder. Everything smelt musty and stale. Besides, the grinding of the chain was an unpleasant sound, suggesting a dragging anchor, and this is as gloomy a subject to contemplate as watching the dragging of Kaffirs or Westralians.

By midnight it blew very hard, so hard that I wondered how the chain could possibly stand the jerks which made the yacht quiver and creak most uncomfortably.

As I write these lines I am just experiencing the miseries of a dragging anchor, but only a mud berth awaits me if the extra chain I have given the little vessel does not help to stop the faithless mudhook, a pestiferous invention without a stock, which I have been foolishly induced to buy by the prejudiced persuasions of injudicious friends.

Perhaps the same reasons prompted them to recommend this perfidious article which caused the fox to point

out how much more beautiful all his tribe would look if its members would only cut off that useless incumbrance with which Nature had so malignantly handicapped them.

Never more will I trust to a stockless anchor. It is my first and last experience, I hope.

But, fortunately, off Calais shore a good old-fashioned anchor was biting the hard sand. The chain tugged its hardest, but the anchor only held the tighter.

The roar of the breakers, however, was growing louder and louder; I could even see the backs of the rising crests as the great waves rose curling in long ridges to thunder in cataracts of foam on the shallows around.

It would be impossible to hold on much longer. We must take the ground very soon, and then it would be rather wet going ashore.

The men seemed very quiet down below. I was just thinking of going down to see what progress they were making with the machinery, when I heard the screw beginning to revolve.

It was a great relief—how great I did not realise until I actually felt we were once more our own masters.

I went to the wheel. The mate appeared.

"Does she make any headway?" I called.

After going forward and taking a long look the mate called out:

"It's all right, sir. We can weigh now; she'll stand up to it."

It was none too soon; the sickly dawn of a wild day was tingeing the east. I could see how very close we were to the sands.

Another quarter of an hour and we should begin to bump heavily. Then nothing could save the vessel,

although we might perhaps be able to get ashore. But the chances were none too good.

I heard afterwards my friend had well insured the boat. I have often wondered if he was counting on my incapacity. He only recovered a quarter of what he had advanced, when he sold the yacht subsequently. He could have been fully indemnified if she had gone to pieces on Calais sands. I did not think of this at the time.

It is sad how selfish one is at such moments. I now understand why he received me rather sadly on my return to town. He expressed no gratitude, I remember, and I felt a little hurt at this at the time. Now, looking back, I can see it all. I know I did not act the part of a true friend—I should have considered him more, myself less.

True, there were others. The engineer, the mate, the cheery little Picard, but then—ah, well, it is useless wasting time in idle regrets; I confess I was selfish! Only one of the party was married, so we only had ourselves to think of, and what is self compared with the obligations of friendship?

But the anchor was coming in. The vessel was plunging into the short, steep sea.

I could see that we were slowly forging ahead.

It was a ticklish moment, for if the engines again broke down nothing could save us now. We had only a quarter of a mile, or less, to go. I steered as steadily for the pier-head light as possible, my ears eagerly listening for the regular beat of the screw. I dreaded lest the unavoidable "racing" should affect the regular throb of the machinery.

Slowly we crept up. Slowly I could see we were gaining on the shore. The heavy seas struck us, but we held our own against them, and more too. We were steadily opening the pier head.

I kept a good offing.

The mate urged me to go closer, but I was resolved to have all the steerage way on I could before attempting to enter the narrow channel.

We were now level with the western pier head. I star-boarded the helm slowly and round we came.

How we did roll as we came broadside to the sea! It seemed as if I had hardly allowed enough for the inevitable leeway.

Tumbling and rolling, now rushing along almost bows under, and with the screw "racing" skyward. Then with bows lifting and with the forefoot some feet out of the water, and the screw twisting away deep down under the half-submerged counter, the little vessel staggered in between the piers.

There was no one about, for it was quite early hours yet.

Every yard we went took us into smoother water, and by the time we had reached the bend in the long jetties we were skimming along peacefully enough.

The ship was saved so far.

Then came a fresh anxiety. How would the authorities take our return?

Had the owner of her telegraphed to have her arrested?

I was quite ignorant of the law; but I well remembered from my Oxford days that that was no excuse. Should I be rendering myself liable to pains and penalties, the extent of which might prove serious?

As I thought of this for the first time I almost wished I was anchored outside again.

There is something humiliating in putting back. It is a confession of weakness. But, after all, to save one's vessel is something, not to speak of the lives of all of us.

Slowly we steamed up alongside the quay and took up our old berth. Then, when all was snug and safe, I turned in. There was nothing else to be done.

When I woke I found breakfast ready, the men all smiles, the engines reported to be in perfect working order.

"It's blowing great guns, sir," said the mate, no longer livid and haggard.

Apparently I was the only dishevelled one of the whole party.

"No use starting to-day, eh?" I asked sleepily, for now the necessity for action was over I felt decidedly slack.

"Not a bit of it, sir, nor yet to-morrow. For if the wind should go down, the sea'll be that lumpy 't wouldn't be fit for we to leave port."

"Humph!" I grunted. I don't like these prognostications from the crew. It means they want a few more days of idling.

There was no doubt, however, that it was blowing very hard. Even here, berthed alongside the quay, the long, uneasy roll of the sea caused us to bump and work against the masonry and strain at our warps.

When I came on deck there was the inevitable douanier watching us casually. There were the fishing boats uneasily swaying in the restless harbour.

The Termin Hotel looked deserted and dreary; and over all a fierce N.N.W. gale was howling and screeching.

Certainly there was nothing to induce one to leave port that day.

"Good job we got in, sir," said the engineer, looking quite a masher in his Sunday clothes. I wondered if the engines had broken down accidentally or of set purpose. They all seemed pleased to be back in harbour.

On second thoughts, however, I felt sure they would never have run the risks we did simply to put back into this dreary shelter again. For Calais is dreary. The country round is dreary, and really Queen Mary need not have taken it so very much to heart when Le Balafré took it. Anyway, that deed at Blois was a sufficient revenge.

What risky times those were for the great ones of the earth ! Lords and dukes have a much better lot now ; at least, if their parts are less heroic and conspicuous, they are a long way more comfortable.

A violent death was a very probable ending for any nobleman too conspicuous for talents, wealth, or personal accomplishments.

The Duke of Guise who took Calais was the most powerful noble of his time, and by a long way more able and determined than his degenerate nephews. Yet all his courage, skill, and influence could not save him from the poniards of the minions of the last descendant of the house of Valois.

Modern Calais cannot be much like the old town of the sixteenth century ; at least, I could perceive very little ancient about it except its smells.

To avoid these I went as far to windward as I could, and buffeted my way out to the end of the East Pier, at least, as far as the heavy seas would let me.

I looked at our anchorage of only ten hours before. The whole sea was a mass of broken water. It seemed marvellous how we had held on.

Then I thought of my friend, and wondered if he would feel pleased when he got my wire saying that we had put back, and were safe in Calais again. Not even then did I realise the selfishness of my conduct.

It never occurred to me at the time that I was actually adding to my friend's expenses, when, by a little less carefulness, a little less effort to preserve our lives, I might so easily have put £1,500 into his pocket, when, owing to my culpable anxiety to take the boat to Southampton, he only recovered £500.

I will do my friend the justice to say that he never actually reproached me; but from his manner, and the total avoidance of all attempt at expressing any thanks for what I had done, I saw how keenly he felt I had failed in my friendship for him.

His silence said as plainly as any words could have done, "My dear fellow, you have disappointed me; I counted on your incapability. I had any number of experienced captains I could have sent. I, purposely, did not employ any of them, as you might easily have understood. 'No,' I said. 'There's Jack, he is a good fellow; he knows what I want; he'll do it.' And have you? Where's my money?—where's my £1,500? Got the yacht, do you say? Good heavens! was there ever such stupidity. What's the good of the yacht?—she's only a further expense. Do I want a yacht?—a beastly thing that only wets you, gives you a sick headache or worse, and makes all one's lady friends green and cross. Don't you know all I care for is horses, hunting, and company promoting, with all its delightful social ramifications? Fifteen hundred pounds is a mere bagatelle, it is true, but still it is hard cash. Whereas a wretched, twopenny-halfpenny yacht!—bah! Jack, you have sadly disappointed me. Risk of loss of life, do you say? My dear chap, don't talk such rot to me. What are the lifeboats for? Besides, I am always pestered by applications for employment. I purposely sent the most useless

hands I knew of. But there was no risk; even if the worst came to the worst, you had life buoys and belts."

Yes, it was all too true. I felt it all afterwards when it was too late. What a curse is selfishness!

As I stood watching the long sea come hurtling in, I thought of none of this. All I thought was, how shall I get the yacht down to Southampton? That was the ostensible purpose of my venture; but I see now how dull I was and what an opportunity for my friend Smithers I was throwing away.

I walked back along the desolate pier. There was no life anywhere near the sea. The fierce wind held undisputed possession.

Before I reached the Hotel Terminus I saw the smoke of the Dover boat; it would be interesting to watch her enter.

Presently her smoke-stack rose above the waves, and soon afterwards her hull rolled and pitched into view.

It certainly was worth while watching her. The man at the wheel had plenty to do, I am sure, to keep her straight for the narrow entrance.

As she rushed in before the tossing waves it seemed as if she must strike one side or the other, so uneven was her way and so staggering her course.

She took the centre well, however, and splashed on into quieter waters.

When I returned on board, I found the Frenchman the only man in charge. He was carrying on a voluble dialogue with a hard-featured, weather-beaten woman holding a baby in her arms.

This was his wife and last-born.

I told him to let them come on board and have tea with him, but he asked if he might be allowed to go home with

them and spend the night. As it was quite clear we should not start before the morning, I willingly agreed, for the little man had really done most of the work, as far as I could see.

It blew hard all that night, but next morning the force of the gale had spent itself. I determined to cross to Dover.

Of course there was grumbling—that I fully expected—but at high water I meant to start, and I gave orders to have steam up by that time.

The engines were reported to be quite right, and there was no likelihood of anything breaking down this time.

I knew the sea must be very lumpy, but the wind had lulled considerably.

At noon we cast off and once more steamed out of the harbour.

We made a slow passage across, owing to the head wind and sea, but by three we were anchored under the lee of the Admiralty Pier, and I felt I had saved Smithers's property for him.

We arrived just in time to see a large ketch sunk by collision with a schooner. I had no idea accidents happened so easily, and with such little fuss.

As we neared Dover bay the sight of what looked like two poles sticking up in the sea attracted my attention, and I soon saw they were the masts of a steamer which had sunk. As I approached we passed through a fleet of coasters profiting by the finer weather to beat down Channel, and one of them very nearly ran into us.

The carelessness of the people on board caused me to watch her, and after she had passed us I saw her run into a ketch which had just gone about. Neither vessel was going fast, but there was much swell on. I expected that a little paint or tar would be taken off, and much

language of the monosyllabic order would be interchanged ; but I did not expect to see the ketch very quietly, but very quickly, take a header and disappear.

It all happened so peacefully, apparently, that danger never occurred to me. The crew were all picked up and the incident was over. Such quiet but business-like catastrophes always remind me of how easily I once saw a man drowned.

It was a lovely summer afternoon, no wind, only a gentle wooing breeze. A little boat went out with two youths in her. Something went wrong aloft. One of the youths foolishly climbed the rickety mast. In an instant the boat capsized. The young man who caused the accident never rose again.

There was no time to do anything. The contrast between that glassy and lovely surface with the suffocation, agony, and death below seemed strangely unreal.

I wired to Smithers that his yacht was safe, feeling sure he must be as pleased as I was ; but I received no message back. That circumstance ought to have shown me the light in which he regarded my achievement, but I was so elated with my success that I only thought of the triumph of having carried the vessel away in spite of all obstacles. Selfish again as usual. No wonder Smithers was disgusted.

Next day we got up steam at four o'clock, and with a fresh northerly wind, under sail and steam, we were not long making the Isle of Wight ; I took the Looe stream mostly because I had never been through it before.

Here was a grand opportunity for Smithers, for the rocks are very conveniently placed, but Fortune, as usual, favoured reckless ignorance.

We scampered past the Mixon and all other remains of

Selsea Cathedral or Town or Bill, which lie all about under the sea, and never gave the old ship a scratch anywhere—a fact all the more surprising as I really did not know which side of the many buoys I ought to go, not having then written any books of “Sailing Tours,” which perhaps was the chief reason why I escaped so easily.

Does a medical man ever take his own medicines?—or a writer of Channel pilots ever trust to his own instructions? Both, no doubt, know better.

However, I was once really so hard put to it that I had to consult my own book. I must confess I did it with much reluctance, and to my great surprise I got safely in; but then I afterwards found they had changed all the positions of the buoys as well as their colours, and I am unable to form any just conclusion as to the value of my work in consequence. At least one thing I may modestly claim, I did use the book, and I reached a safe anchorage without accident.

We made Southampton without any further adventure, and we might have smuggled any amount of things with perfect impunity, for no Custom House people ever came near us, either here or at Dover.

When I reached town that evening I went straight to Smithers, expecting the congratulations due to my success.

He greeted me with quite a casual and rather cold “Hullo, old chap! so you’ve returned, have you? Well, I never expected to see you back, seeing the gales we’ve been having; those fellows at the weather office were quite right, they prophesied heavy weather for the last three or four days. Where’s the bothering old boat?”

I told him; and then, instead of caring to hear all about our adventures, the masterly way in which I had saved his

property, and the imminent risks we had run, he only wanted to discuss the chances of getting enough underwritten to go to allotment with another wretched syndicate, whose only claim to recognition was based on a report written by an ex-private in a cavalry regiment now turned mining engineer and expert in metallurgy and mines; but I remember now there was another recommendation this *ci-devant* soldier possessed—he was related to a member of the aristocracy, and was able to induce his noble relative to take a seat on the Board of the Ooloo Exploration Syndicate for a consideration and a substantial honorarium to himself.

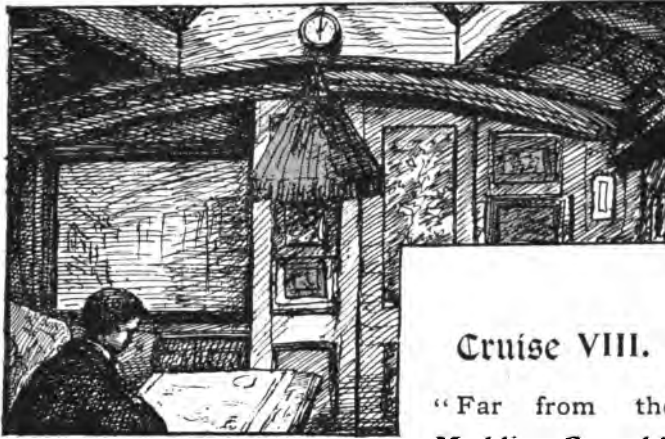
I wasn't in the least interested in all this; indeed, I hated the whole business.

"But you see, my dear fellow," remarked Smithers, who I will say acted very generously in not reproaching me with his disappointment, "now I have got that wretched yacht on my hands instead of £1,500, you might go round to your rich relatives and point out to them what a grand chance there is in this new business. It is the least you can do under the circumstances."

Then I understood how selfish I had been, and all my pride in having brought the yacht out of the clutches of the French authorities and in the teeth of a hard gale faded away—I saw I had misunderstood my tortuous friend. I went to bed sadder and wiser.

I believe the yacht was eventually sold for £350.

Smithers might have lost that, but for me.



CABIN OF THE "LADY HARVEY."

Cruise VIII.

"Far from the
Madding Crowd."

"**Y**OU'VE got a bargain in that old yacht, anyhow. She's a clean, comfortable old craft, and it's a pity they don't build more like her."

So said the yacht agent, as I handed him the purchase money of the *Lady Harvey* yawl.

"How are you off for crew?" added Mr. Henaquin.

"Oh, all right, thank you. I am not going to take a large crew."

"You'll want at least two hands and a boy. She's a big, powerful boat, and that'll be none too many."

"You have exactly hit off the hands I mean to take; my only doubt is about the boy," I replied drily. It was not necessary to explain that the two hands were my own: I should only incur derision, or the charge of madness. "Quite mad, my dear sir, quite mad, I assure you," is a remark I have now become accustomed to.

If to be unusual is to be mad; if to revel in the charm of being free and unfettered, far from posts, from cities, from

the greedy strife of men ; if to be all ready to move one's house and effects from one place to another, wherever the fancy or climate may invite ; to be rent free, tax free, free from drains, pipes, and all the abominations of an over-civilised, platitudinarian, faddist, and superficial society, is to be mad, then I am mad.

I hate a cackling mob, and would shun it whenever possible. Forms and ceremonies are an abomination unto me. The happiest creatures in existence seem to me the sea fowl.

To see the pretty birds on a summer afternoon revelling in the careless happiness of life as they float in merry families on the glassy water round Handa Isle, or dive with exuberant joy to chase their food as it almost tickles their little web feet, is a sight to make a man envious.

No cares have they—no education question, no Eastern enigma, no social problems. Content to live as their ancestors lived, to wear the same garb in due season, to eat the same food, to frequent the same spots, to talk the same tongue, to use the same means of locomotion, to observe the same times and seasons, to vie with no one, rival no one, despise no one ; to neither give nor go to any dinner parties, to write no books, to have no religious questions, no fierce bickerings over dogmas and creeds which may or may not be of vital importance, but which the unsophisticated mind of a peace-loving mortal would fain leave to each individual to decide for himself, nor seek to convince any of error or sin—is not this true happiness, even if of the negative order ?

Is a man mad who shuns the busy struggle for existence, abandons the jostling of his fellows, where chicanery, envy, backbiting, cheating, malice, lying, and all unrighteousness prevail, and chooses when possible to live with Nature for

his mistress, the beauty of an unsullied sea and sky, the wooded dell or craggy mountain for his surroundings?

Am I only expressing the dumb yearnings of a vagabond? Where would society, where would the boasted civilisation of our age be if men followed such an idle life?

I cannot tell, nor need I bother about the matter. The very fact that such as do put in practice these ideas are looked upon as mad, is sufficient proof of the rarity of such tastes.

Ages ago Aristotle said, sententiously enough, that a man who avoided his kind must be either a god or a beast. But it is not necessary to avoid one's kind, only to choose it without having it forced on you. One meets far more pleasant acquaintances in such a life than one does in the ordinary humdrum of society as it exists in those miles and miles of more or less real respectability which forms the suburban villa residence of that huge part of our population called the middle-class, a class, perhaps, wherein mainly are fostered the most typical and most praiseworthy of our national ideas, but wherein assuredly are engendered much prejudice, much narrow-mindedness, much hypocritical self-righteousness. And who is to answer for these latter notions? Is it not mainly the women? But I am on dangerous ground.

I am still talking to the yacht agent.

"If you are in want of any good man, I can easily find you one," said this gentleman, as he bid me a prosperous cruise.

But I was not at all in difficulties, and left him gladly, for I was oppressed by the smart models, the pictures, and all the signs of that unbridled luxury and wealth which modern yachting as understood by the gilded classes so ostentatiously exhibits and revels in.

When I went on board the fine old tub I had bought, and in which I intended exploring the British islands, I found all ready for sea.

A boy had been provided for me. A shock-headed, low-browed, fleshy young man. He was big, lazy-looking, and altogether dissimilar to the kind of boy I wanted, but there was no time then to look for another, and I felt I could always do without him if the occasion occurred to dispense with his services.



CREW NO. 1.—
THE COLNE.

The former captain of the yacht and two other hands accompanied us down as far as Brightlingsea. There we anchored for the night, and the men returned to Row Hedge.

I soon found how utterly useless this so-called boy was, and not only useless, but disagreeable. We agreed to part on the first opportunity. It appeared his only experience of yachting had been as "under steward," as he called it, on one of the largest and most luxurious of the floating palaces which are occupied for about a month during the year by their owners, or let at large rentals to some prosperous speculator.

Manifestly such a training was the worst possible for a hand to go cruising with me. The young man had developed the tastes of a gourmand, from a daily revel off the remains of the good things which came from the rich man's table. Such simple fare as satisfied me was vile to him. He had never been accustomed to any harder work than washing up dishes and plates, and missed the society of the forecandle and the pantry.

He and I looked at everything from an absolutely

different standpoint; there was no chance of ever making anything out of this greedy, lazy, incompetent lout.

It was important to catch the last of the ebb, so as to carry the young flood up the Ray Channel, and into the Crouch. This meant an early rise, but early rising was not among the habits of my crew. He did not appear on deck until I had nearly hoisted the mainsail. Then it took him some time to yawn and stretch himself. At last, with grumbling deliberation, he went to the winch and began to look at it.

The more I worked, mindful of the proverb about example being more persuasive than precept, the sulkier he grew, but no more work did he do.

The yacht was quite new to me; I had never handled any craft of more than ten tons, and then only when steering in a race, and of course the gear of a yawl nearly thirty tons is much more complicated than that of a small cutter of five tons. I had never been in the Colne before, had never sailed off the East Coast, or, indeed, anywhere on the English coast east of the Isle of Wight.

Sandbanks were almost unknown quantities. Now, however, I was about to find my way down a channel and into an estuary blocked with sands, badly buoyed, after leaving the Colne and Blackwater estuaries, and with the lowlands so begirt with shoals as to be almost invisible, especially in the haze of an early spring morning.

Well as I know this coast now, I still think the navigation from the Mouse Lightship to Harwich and into the Crouch, the Blackwater, and the Colne, as well as about the Naze and into the Sokens, as complicated as any; not to speak of the Deben and Alde rivers, with their shifting bars. True, the dangers are all sand, and one does not go to

pieces at once as would be the case if one struck about Ushant, the Scillies, or the Orkneys ; but if the sea is heavy the ultimate results are not altogether dissimilar, and whether one breaks up in five minutes, an hour, or a week, is much the same to the ship, although the risk to life is undoubtedly less on a sandbank than among rocks.

For assistance in finding out the Ray Channel, or, as it is locally called, "The Raysin," I trusted to the lad the yacht builder had promised to find for me, and it was a little disconcerting, to say the least of it, to discover that my crew was not only most objectionable by disposition, habits, and training, but was also quite incapable. We managed to find out the way, however, and arrived at Burnham without any delay on the sands, although it was very hazy, and the Buxey Buoy and Beacon were only to be seen when we were close upon them.

So many yachtsmen know the navigation of these waters that perhaps it seems a little weak to regard the passage from Brightlingsea to Burnham as a feat ; but let them imagine themselves for the first time on this coast, with a craft treble the size of one they have been used to, and I think they will understand the satisfaction I felt at getting to my anchorage without unnecessary loitering on the banks.

From the Solent, with all its delightful land-locked creeks and mazy inlets, in the midst of the smiling downs and woods of the Isle of Wight and Hampshire, it is a bleak change to the miles and miles of sunken shores, of amphibious surroundings, where the land appears and disappears at regular intervals, and even a great part of the dry land which does remain visible constantly is below high-water mark at all times.

A careful study of the ramifications of the Essex creeks gives me a higher opinion of the curiosity and prying pertinacity of those ancient Danes or Northmen than of their piratical habits even. The very place where I am writing these lines is at the present day more frequented by the descendants of those terrible Oesterlings or Frisians than by the offspring of the Saxon whom they so ruthlessly plundered.

Alongside of me is one Dutchman, lower down are four more; the land itself is the work of the same dogged, laborious people, who have a natural instinct for shallow, sand-encumbered waters, and feel at once at home in such surroundings.

At Burnham the crew and I parted, with evidently mutual satisfaction, after one day's experience. From what I heard him muttering about a "Wandering Jew," I might have inferred that he was possessed of a literary taste, and I believe the sullen, lazy, self-indulgent, incapable youth was given to the reading of novelettes and other such trash, for I found an astounding fiction in the forecastle after the lout had left.

I have no idea what became of this hopeful specimen of a yacht crew, but have little doubt he has found many berths since then on the kind of yacht his talents and energy are equal to. The only job he showed any interest in during the twenty-four hours he spent on board the *Lady Harvey* was in making a pudding.

After this experience I decided on trying cruising alone.

I began this tentatively, two sails at a time, and under foresail and mizzen I ran up to Althorne, which instinct told me was a far safer anchorage than Burnham.

In all these creeks where the tides run strong and the prevailing winds are up and down it is absolutely necessary to moor, and to moor well too. A vessel may, with plenty of scope of cable, ride for two or three tides, but it is a chance; and say what the natives may about no craft tripping her anchor if she does not do what they call "break her sheer," I know from many practical proofs in my own case, as well as from watching the troubles of others, that no vessel can remain safe unless quite strongly moored. A small kedge is no use, and plenty of scope should be given on both chain and warp.

All this is well known, no doubt, to all yachtsmen, only I must say, from many years' observation of the ways of those who knock about on the water, that amateurs are much too inclined to let their knowledge lag sadly behind their practice, when it comes to anchoring or choosing a berth.

From Burnham, which was then hardly known to even a few veteran yachtsmen, and was entirely destitute of craft as I sailed out of the Crouch, my course lay to Grays; every inch of the East Coast and Thames estuary being then quite unknown to me, I anchored off Southend for a night, but was driven from my berth by a strong easterly wind next morning.

It seems to me that amateurs who learn their seaman-ship in the Thames acquire it in the best of schools. I picked up what little I know entirely by myself, but in very different waters from those of the Thames. I have never had a paid hand to teach me, and have never sailed a boat under anyone else's direction, except now and then when helping a friend in a race; and then I mostly was given the steering to do.

How curiously prejudice influences ignorant minds! I well remember, when I only knew the Solent and its ways, I used to regard the yachts which flew an East Coast, or Thames, or Mersey yacht club burgee with a certain contempt, a kind of prejudice as ridiculous as it was unwarranted.

True, the yachts which belong to the Solent are, as a rule, the smartest in the world, exactly as the carriages and horses one sees in Hyde Park are beyond comparison the best-turned-out in the land, perhaps in the world also—but this again may be prejudice.

In my young days, as in everyone's young days, I suppose, my judgments, likes, and dislikes were influenced vastly by the narrow cliquism which governs respectability. As one becomes more and more of a vagabond, a larger view is obtained. If one loses in one direction one gains in another; but on the whole I am inclined to think that the safeguards which prejudice provides are useful in keeping vulgarity, familiarity, and actual discomfort at a distance, however unwarranted and ridiculous the suspicions engendered by this narrow cliquism may be.

In every yacht club there are snobs; in every yacht club there are downright good fellows—smart seamen, excellent yachtsmen, and clever, well-bred, well-informed gentlemen—in some more, some less; but the most distinguished of them all may, perhaps, contain as many of those whom Thackeray so wittily described, as any of the others.

What yachtsman, however, exists who would not like to fly the white ensign if he could?

The Thames yachtsman and Corinthian sailor as I have known him is generally a hardy seaman. The strength of the tides in all the creeks he mostly frequents, and the

direction of these inlets, being generally opposed to the prevalent winds at either ebb or flood, makes him a proficient at bringing up in a tideway, but good ground tackle is not always in sufficient evidence. Even as I write, I look out through my side scuttle and see a handy-looking little craft, high and dry on her beam-ends, with all her ground tackle stretched hopeless and forlorn behind her, not one anchor has held, and yet the breeze only blew with the force of a strong wind.

It is the strain the tide puts upon the gear, when the breeze is against it, which causes the anchor to get foul, and then to drag, and this fact the yachtsmen of the Thames estuary are usually well acquainted with.

A whole chapter could be written on anchors—but this is not the place for such a dissertation. Only of this fact let all amateurs be aware (and I know it from my own actual experience): the new-fangled stockless anchor does not hold like the old-fashioned one. I cannot speak of how they act in large vessels except by hearsay, and report is contradictory, but I know I have dragged with fifteen fathoms out, when I never should have done so in a boat twice the size of that I was in, and with the old Bay Palm holding on as it so well knows how.

I left Grays for Harwich, and explored all the ramifications of that part of the East Coast.

The Stour as far as Mistley Quay, and the Orwell as far as Ipswich, afforded me plenty of work, and I look back upon the first exploration of those waters with a certain wonder.

Even small boats frequently get ashore on the many mud flats which render the navigation of all the Essex and Suffolk creeks difficult for a stranger.

The *Lady Harvey* was a large boat to handle in such confined and intricate channels, which are for the most part very scantily buoyed and beacons. She was nearly thirty tons, and drew fully six feet, yet I never remember touching once, not even when, with a temerity which only ignorance and novelty could justify, I entered the narrow water of Handford, a place I should certainly be most chary of attempting now, although my craft draws one foot less.

It was not until I got aground on one of the dykes in the Rye river that I found what a very uncomfortable thing running ashore was, but that did not happen until I had left the East Coast for a four years' cruise.

I think there must be an especial guardian angel who watches over beginners in the art of sailing, if they are only reckless enough, and trust sufficiently to their luck.

I had now shipped a "crew" again. This was a lad from the industrial training ship *Cornwall* lying off Purfleet.

This boy was the first of a series of boys from this class of vessel whom I have shipped as crew, and, take him all round, I think he was the best of them.

He was a fair, happy-go-lucky looking lad, of about sixteen years. He was strong for his age and could handle the dinghy pretty well. That was about the extent of his seamanship, but fortunately there is so little to do in such a vessel as the tubby old boat I was cruising in, that ignorance of fore-and-aft sailing did not prevent his being useful in the way I wanted him.

His work was almost entirely limited to keeping things tidy down below, cleaning the brass work, and scrubbing the deck. I looked after all the rest. I made it a rule never to let the boy have any night work, even when making a passage. As a matter of fact, I generally managed to do

as little night work as possible. Along the South Coast, and off the West Coast of Scotland and East Coast of Ireland, this is easily arranged, but from Penzance to Holyhead and Holyhead to Lock Ryan some night work is practically unavoidable.

Young enthusiasts, I know, profess a great delight in the novelty of a night at sea. Now and again the adventure has its charm, no doubt. A warm summer night with a smooth sea and gentle breeze on the beam, when the moon is at the full, and the grey and silver tints are exquisite in their subtle harmony, provides sensations of a vague yearning joy unknown at any other time.

To me there are no pleasures so pure, so unalloyed, so absolutely tranquillising as the rare charm of such a voyage.

But such nights are very seldom the lot of the sailor.

I can only recall three such passages in all my cruises. More often there is a fresh wind, a curling sea, driving rain, and a chilliness which eats into the bones, especially about an hour or two before dawn.

At night, too, there is the uncertainty of the morrow, which is more vivid in its possibilities than seems likely during the day.

There is, as the poet said long ago, "a terror which walketh in darkness," which seizes on the imagination, and prevents the enjoyment of the present. I know that the majority of Corinthian sailors will disagree with me. To these ardent and energetic souls a continued, uninterrupted run, or even turn to windward for the whole length of the Channel and even to the Straits of Gibraltar, is the acme of delightful sailing; and I can easily understand how this may be so in a powerful craft of some

fifty or sixty tons, well found, well manned, and well handled.

In a smaller craft, and with only one or two hands, the work is too much and the discomfort too great to my mind ; but the same countries may be reached and the same ports made, and many more interesting ones, too, in a far cheaper and more adventurous way.

I have now, practically single-handed, visited most of the places the old Vikings used to haunt. All the inlets of East Anglia, the Thames, with its numerous creeks, Lindisfarne, the Tyne, the Forth, the Orkneys, the very centre of the Viking realm ; the West Coasts of Scotland, the Isle of Man, the East Coast of Ireland, where the Scandinavians founded a Norse kingdom ; Wales, stubborn and rugged, but beautiful and winsome ; the lost realm of Lyonesse, Cornwall, and all that smiling South Coast from Penzance to the Owers, where the happy cruiser may find a port at every thirty miles or so ; the French coast, the Seine and Normandy, the most renowned of all the conquests of those fierce sea kings ; Brittany, with its mazy rocks and snug harbours ; the Loire, the land of chivalry, romance, and crime—all may be visited as easily as I have sailed from Erith to Burnham and without the expense or annoyance of a regular yacht crew.

My crew consisted of the chubby, impudent-looking lad who volunteered to come with me from the *Cornwall*. All went well on the opening cruise to Harwich, only I could not find what became of the potatoes in the stew when it



CREW NO. 2.—
THE THAMES.
"PLEASE, SIR, THE
'TATERS 'AVE HALL
BOILED AWAY."

was served up. I was at that time very ignorant of cooking, so when the boy explained "as 'ow they was hall boiled away," I believed him, and requested him not to let it happen again. However, it did happen again, and repeatedly too.


Then I studied the question. I boiled the potatoes myself as an experiment. I found it took a long time for them to disappear by boiling, but I discovered that they did vanish pretty effectually if I picked them out and ate them. Whence I drew my own conclusions.

This boy after the first week or two developed qualities which had up till then remained dormant, but which I subsequently discovered were common to all the boys I had off training ships. He was very idle, dainty, given to petty pilfering, lied in season and out, and was very little use generally.

We left Harwich with a gentle S.E. breeze; made Margate that afternoon, where a heavy squall came up from the S.W., and I anchored off the pier to let the weather develop.

It was lucky I did, for it blew hard that night, and with morning veered to the N.N.W. This meant clearing out and a hard fight with the anchor. I know few places where the mud-hook holds on tighter than just to the eastward of Margate promenade pier. When at last the anchor did come up the stock was bent badly, but I had no time to attend to it, as it was all I could do to get her away from the lee shore on which the sea was setting nastily.

What joy there is when one turns a corner and runs into quiet water. It was a delicious sail all through the Downs. By dark we were off Brighton, with the wind heading us and rain beginning to fall. After a dirty night of it I put



into Portsmouth, and after my manner saved anchoring by mooring to two of the Government buoys off Priddy's Hard.

Here my boy, who had developed more and more disagreeable tendencies, left me, and I cruised alone for a week or two.

Going in and out of Portsmouth Harbour in a large boat like the *Lady Harvey* and picking up a buoy single-handed gives one plenty of work, but she was such a handy boat that I never had any accident until, having shipped another lad for Cowes week and returning under trysail, mizzen, and third jib, a catastrophe did very nearly occur.

It was this way. The morning I left Cowes was very windy ; I had a party on board, children and ladies, so I set the trysail and mizzen instead of the mainsail, thinking I should save trouble and have no boom to bother about.

In plenty of wind the old boat would steer admirably under this canvas, but if the wind fell light, then she was not accountable for her actions, she wanted her mainsail.

We passed the Blockhouse and were entering Portsmouth Harbour with a swinging flood. The wind, as ill luck would have it, suddenly fell light and came dead ahead. There are always many obstructions in this much-frequented harbour, but I had hitherto managed well and kept in the middle as far as possible ; so I intended doing now, when to my dismay I saw the *Victory* and the other men-of-war dressing ship and manning the yards, while one of the Royal yachts flying the Royal Standard and the Imperial Standard of Germany came steaming down the middle of the harbour.

I was just clear of the Narrows. If I went about, as I should have liked to do in order to avoid the eddies over on the Gosport side and the many yachts always lying

there, I should be in the way of the yacht, which was already giving a warning scream of its whistle.

I held on, luffing all I could to avoid being carried across the bows of one of the gun brigs lying near the *St. Vincent*. Then I tried to go about. It was too late, the eddy tide had got hold of the yacht and she refused to answer her helm.

In another minute we were across the bowsprit of a cutter and should have hung up only I got a warp on board another craft and hauled off.

Had I been wise I should have let go my anchor, and landed the party, but I thought I could work up to Priddy's Hard, so having got clear and the vessel's head pointing the right way, I cast off and was steering a very close course to pass between the stern of a yawl and the bowsprit of a schooner astern. I had judged my distance, and was sure of doing it, only, in order to be quite safe in shooting past the bowsprit of the vessel astern, it was necessary that I should go so close to the yawl as almost to touch her.

At this moment the boy called out, "Do you see the dinghy, sir?"

"Great Knut!" I thought, "there must be a boat crossing us."

This was quite possible, and yet for me not to see it, as the bows of my craft were fully seven feet above the water.

The dilemma was bad. If I luffed I should smash into the yacht ahead: if I kept on I should run down the dinghy. I chose the former.

* * * * *

"Oh!" said the lady, "I had such perfect confidence in your steering that I knew there was no danger."

"But didn't you see that in another second the jib-boom of that schooner would have run you through like—like—bother! I haven't any time to think of a simile now; but, thank goodness, no damage is done—not much to speak of, anyhow."

"Well, sir, and how are you going to clear us?" asked a gruff voice.

"That is precisely what I should like to know myself. The tide is holding us, jammed across your bowsprit."

"Yes, and 'tis lucky you ain't broke our figure-head," remarked another rough voice in a surly tone, as a man leant over to remove the little golden trident, which the gilded sea god, forming a very tasty figure-head, was holding in his hand.

It certainly had been a lucky escape. Somehow, although we were pinned across the bows of the vessel, and were held in a grip as heavy as the whole weight of a furious tide could put upon us, we had escaped injury except to one of the weather shrouds, which was smashed, and a slight abrasion to the after-side of the mast, as the bowsprit passed between it and the trysail.

We had done absolutely no damage to the other yacht. It seemed a marvel with so many people on deck that no one was hurt. I stuck to the helm as long as it was any good, and then, seeing that one of the ladies must inevitably be transfixed by the jib-boom, I ran forward and pushed her chair violently aside. As there was no time or room to rise, this just saved her, and then the yachts locked together.

We got clear when the tide slacked, and no one was any the worse for the accident. This was the only collision I have ever been guilty of, and I trust it will be the last.

I mended the broken shroud as well as I could, and thought so little of it that I cruised all down the Bay of Biscay and round Great Britain without having it replaced by a new one ; but then I did many things which authorities said were all wrong. It is difficult for a diffident man not to be guided or influenced by authority, but I find I have never suffered except when I have followed the advice of others. The man whom Nature has imbued with an instinctive sense of the fitness of things should also be endowed, by the same good or evil fairy, with the courage of his convictions.

The boy I picked up at Gosport did not remain long. He was told by his friends it "warn't safe to be cruisin' in such a large craft with only one 'and," also the work was "too 'ard." Seeing that all the work was finished by ten o'clock in the morning, perhaps the poor lad was over-worked. Fortunately I have never been disconcerted or inconvenienced by an absence of crew.

That remark of Diogenes' has always seemed to me quite apt when a servant gives notice to leave. "What !" said the cynic, when his friends (if he had any, which I doubt, for at this time he had no worldly belongings except a broken potsherd, a tub—not for washing—and a good supply of vermin) came to condole with him on the loss of his slave. "What ! is my slave able to get on without me and I am not able to live without my slave ! "

To minds like that of Diogenes the one thing most valuable in this life is independence ; when that is gone let life go too. So as the boy could do without me I could do very well without the boy.

After a week of refitting I started for the West with two excellent youngsters whom their parents allowed to come with me for a cruise. They had never been on a yacht

before, and their joy was great until they got clear of the Needles, when life did not seem quite so joyous. However, by the time we dropped anchor in Swanage Bay matters had improved a bit.

The coast between Swanage and Weymouth struck me as very beautiful the first time I went past it. Even now that I know intimately all the coasts of Great Britain, I can recall little finer or more diversified coast scenery than the five or six miles between St. Aldhelm, or Alban's Head, and White Nose; especially about Arish Mill Gap and Durdle Door, where the scenery is most lovely. Chalk cliffs, Purbeck marble, black bituminous rocks and shale, form the immediate foreground. Fantastic arches, strangely shaped cliffs of every form, caves, detached rocks, everything that goes to make a romantic and picturesque shore, are here in abundance; while over all is the glorious sun, for the coast faces south and basks in the sunshine whenever Phœbus deigns to smile.

The boasted grandeur of Skye is not nearly so beautiful as this bit of our own rather despised South Coast scenery, to my mind. I know of many pieces on this same lovely South Coast of ours which are unequalled for beauty anywhere else on our coasts, unless perhaps it is at Loch Leven.

The Corinthian yachtsman, except it be in search of fresh adventures, need never sail round the Longships or past Orford Ness to find anything better than Babbicombe, Dartmouth, Lulworth Cove, or even the coast between Lyme Regis and Budleigh Salterton; only the coast, to be appreciated, should be seen close in, not further off than half a mile at most—a quarter of a mile is better when possible.

We had a head wind as usual going down to Weymouth, but in spite of that I was able to enjoy the scenery once

again. I always try and cheat the nasty races of St. Catherine, St. Aldhelm, and Portland when possible, and it is generally in one's power to do so.

This time I was, however, unable to steal quietly by Portland. I had taken every precaution, too, for I hate a rough-and-tumble as much as most people. I had weighed anchor at four in the morning in Portland Roads, so as to catch the tide at slack off the Bill, but it fell an absolute calm as we passed through the back door of the Breakwater. By the time the Bill came in sight the ebb was running its hardest.

The day before it had blown very strongly from the southwest, and the sea was still lumpy. I could hear the roar of the race ahead. As we came lolloping along, the youngest of my amateurs woke up and put his head up the companion. He sat sleepily contemplating the scene.

There was not much to see. Everything was grey and misty. The two lights of Portland were growing dim before the coming day.

"I say!" suddenly, but sleepily, remarked my young friend, "do you see that wall? You'll be against it directly."

That was quite true, but it wasn't a wall—at least not of masonry. It was such a wall as the Israelites saw on each side of them while they trod the bottom of the Red Sea dry shod.

It was only the waters standing in a heap.

We very soon encountered this wall, when my young friend went below. Next morning, when I bathed, I saw the bruises I had received in that tussle.

In spite of having a good tackle on the tiller, I could no more hold the rudder in that rough-and-tumble than I could fly. I was banged now to port, now to starboard.

At one moment the boat was plunging up to her mast in the sea: at another, a great upright roaring wave came tumbling over the counter as far as the companion ladder.

Then, somehow, she seemed to take the sea on board at both ends, and I was powerless to do anything to help her. The sea roared and foamed, tumbled and hissed all round us, like the froth of a boiling cauldron.

For nearly ten minutes or a quarter of an hour this hurly-burly lasted. Then suddenly the sea grew calm, a light breeze sprang up, and once more sailing resumed its normal aspect.

I have been through the Race, or over it, many times since, but have never had any rough-and-tumble like that, and I never want to.

It is a curious thing, but never yet, with fair wind or foul, have I been able to make Dartmouth by daylight from Portland. But I have, on the contrary, always made Portland Bill from Salcombe or Dartmouth quite early in the day, and once I even managed to anchor off Calshot spit before midnight, after leaving Salcombe at eight that morning.

Going westward, Teignmouth or Torbay have been my usual limits before nightfall, and I have nearly always run into wet weather before dawn.

This was my first voyage further west than Falmouth, and I well remember how delightfully fresh everything seemed.

There is a charm about first explorations which no subsequent cruise in the same waters ever provides.

Portland Bill had disappointed me. Not so the sunrise over the silent sea when anchored off Teignmouth next morning.

It had been raining most of the night, a quiet, persistent, soaking rain.

When I turned out, however, at four in the morning the rain had ceased. Over the grey and glassy sea was a pink mist. Nothing was visible. Scarcely a sound interrupted brooding Nature. Landwards I heard a faint "click, click." A church bell tolled muffled, but sweet, over the still water. A rumbling of something heavy at regular intervals boomed behind the veil of mellow vapour.

Our anchor chain was up and down; we hardly swung to the heave of the ebbing sea.

Gradually, as I looked landwards, the pink veil became more ruddy; I could see rifts here and there as of grey shadows, flushed in between with rosy streaks.

The colouring was marvellous; it was so brilliant as to be unnatural. I had not yet seen the red sandstone of Devon.

I have never since seen it so beautiful.

There was something in the light of early dawn piercing the steaming vapour of a soaking night, which lit up the cliffs about Babbicombe and Shaldon Ness in an almost unearthly manner.

The green meadows steeply rising behind, with their luxuriant hedges and outcropping tors glistening in spangled diamonds, were vivid in their verdure.

Up and up rose the mist, more and more brilliant grew the scene, until at last the whole enchanting coast from Torbay to Dawlish blushed exquisite and sweet, like a dainty maiden before the eyes of her delighted lover.

Dartmouth, too, was another happy surprise.

I think the Dart must always be a matter of joyful wonder to every cruiser, but its charms are only to be

fully appreciated when finding it out for oneself without any previous ideas or expectations, and when coming from the east.

I knew we must be near the entrance, but I had no book of sailing directions, and did not know that the large beacon on the hill to the eastward marked the landfall.

The rock scenery, however, was so interesting, that I kept as close as I dared to the cliffs, and had just passed a splendid group of jagged heads, reminding me of the pinnacles on Milan's glorious shrine, when I saw a deeply recessed bay, bordered apparently by inaccessible cliffs, above which a bleak slope of wind-shorn turf ended in rugged tors and rocky bluffs.

I knew I must be close to Dartmouth, but I could see no houses or outlying villas such as usually straggle out from an important town. There were no signs whatever of human habitation—not even a lighthouse or coastguard station.

I steered more into the centre of this inhospitable looking bay. Then I saw a buoy. I approached it. I was within a quarter of a mile of the inaccessible cliffs. I carefully examined the forbidding wall of rock ahead. There was a deep shadow at the end or innermost part of the bight, for it looked nothing more. This might be a rift in the cliffs or an entrance to a narrow inlet. Above the rift were steeply sloping downs, with many ridges falling abruptly towards each other.

Evidently there was a deep valley here.

The bay was worth exploring, and I steered past the buoy.

Then I saw another. There was clearly an important channel, and I must be nearing Dartmouth.

As I stood on, wondering when my faith would be rewarded, suddenly a grey tower emerged right ahead.

Then I saw smoke, houses perched high up among woods. Another tower, an ancient fortification on my left. An old grey church above it embowered in woods, the land behind so steep and lofty that it looked almost impossible to climb.

The yacht rippled through the water. My amateur crew were open-mouthed with delight. Not only was the scene fascinating in the extreme, but did not that narrow lane of water mean a quiet anchorage; did it not lead to shops and the joys of a good dinner?

We rippled in, and suddenly the wind dropped. The mainsail hung limp and lifeless, the jib and foresail bulged in ugly folds. Weatherworn and stretched, a calm revealed all their hard work. Sails, like the beauties of the East, do not preserve their fair proportions for many seasons.

Dartmouth is undoubtedly a difficult place for a single-handed sailor. At least it is more anxious, perhaps, than really difficult. The baffling puffs and flaws of wind and the eddies of the tide are more perplexing than actually dangerous, provided one keeps one's head.

Vessels moored in midstream are the most obvious dangers, and these it is hard work to avoid when the wind falls scant and the tide sets strong.

The first time I went in I dropped anchor off Warfleet Cove and found it a very good berth.

Here I shipped my next boy, for amateurs, however good their inclinations may be, are never equal to any strain, and do not like work as a rule.

The boy who now offered himself was so unlikely looking a lad that I declined him, promising to inquire into his character, and making him, as I thought, clearly to understand that unless he heard from me again there was no need for him to think further about the matter.

I did make inquiries, and as the answers were not entirely satisfactory, I thought no more of the business.

That night, about midnight, I thought I heard a noise in the forecastle. I lighted a lamp and went forward to look.

To my astonishment I saw a dim form seated on a locker.

"Hullo!" I called out. "Who the dickens are you?"

"I've come aboard, sir," answered a rather husky voice.

"Oh, you have, have you! Well, and who on earth gave you leave to come here?"

"I thought as how you'd want me, so I've come."

It was my fat friend who had volunteered his services that morning.

I confess I was a bit staggered. The boat that had brought him off was nowhere to be seen. It meant, if I ordered him ashore, I should have to land him. I looked out. There was a thin drizzle falling. It was very dark. I could hear the breeze humming strong in the rigging. Pyjamas are not suited to this sort of thing. I told the boy he was something—more emphatic than elegant—and said I would speak to him in the morning. Then I went back to bed. There was a childish obstinacy, an injured innocency about that lad I could never make out. His round, fat, flabby face, lank hair, moist manner of speaking, and unnaturally fat figure, were all comic. He did not look like a dangerous villain, so I slept tranquilly.

Early next morning I looked out. There was a good breeze from the westward. The tide was just right for going out. I woke my amateurs and bid them get all ready as fast as they could for an immediate start.



CREW No. 3.—
THE DART.
"SWISS MILK."

Then I went forward to examine my pirate or stowaway. I found him snoring volubly. I woke him up. He looked more comically innocent than ever. I could hardly speak to him without laughing.

His story seemed plausible. He said he had thought he was to come off unless he heard from me again. He had not heard so he had come.

This might be true, at any rate he looked far too innocent and stupid to invent a lie. "I shall have to land him and that will delay us a lot," I thought, for the dinghy was stowed on deck.

He seemed so anxious to be taken, promised to be so very useful, that I thought I would try him for a week anyhow, and set him to shorten in the chain.

That day about noon we were off Portland Bill. As I had not seen the fat boy for some little time, I sent one of my amateurs to look for him. He was found sleeping heavily, and showed evident signs of the sea not agreeing with him; also by his side was a half-empty tin of Swiss milk.

My informant thought there was a connection between all the circumstances, and I agreed.

By ten o'clock we were running up through Hurst Narrows. The wind had fallen light. Next morning we moored off Priddy's Hard again, and I landed my amateur crew.

The fat boy had repented of his ways, and was soon in a fair way to becoming an excellent hand, provided he was looked after.

Early in October I started west again. That cruise nearly had a bad ending.

I started for the West, intending to reach the Scillies and return to Falmouth for the winter.

By the time we reached Dartmouth the fat boy had become quite a proficient sailor, so far at least as the calls upon his seamanship which I made were concerned. He could go aloft and unlace the topsail, and he could handle the jib sheet fairly well. He could even steer in a smooth sea, and with a beam wind.

From Dartmouth—where, by the way, I made the acquaintance of the boy's mother, a most portentous and garrulous female, given to chucklings and slobbering articulations like her son, but as good-natured and easy in disposition as was to be expected from so untidy and abundant an appearance—from Dartmouth westward all was unknown, and the joys of cruising were greater in proportion.

To the many hardy yachtsmen and brother Corinthians who know all the ins and outs of our coasts, a recital of each day's cruise would be an insupportable infliction, and I will spare them such a trial; but I think all lovers of cruising will admit that the first impressions of new places, and the hazards of a first entry, unaided by anyone or anything except an Admiralty chart, are interesting.

I know I like much to hear of other people's experiences, and as I listen to them I can well recall the excitement of other days. It is this excitement which makes cruising so delightful—the uncertainty, the novelty, and the gratified pride of overcoming difficulties which exist in most new ports, although they are also very much and very often exaggerated by the local watermen. Just as the local authorities in the lake or mountain districts declare the dangers of their localities to be so great as to necessitate the employment of guides.

Salcombe is just such a place to amuse and interest an

amateur cruiser. The entrance is not really difficult, although an accurate description of its dangers would lead one to think so.

The first time I went in it was just low water spring tides, so that the condition of the bar was the most dangerous for crossing, and I had the very haziest ideas of its shape and position.

To add to the fun there was a heavy swell breaking across it, and as I approached I could see the long wall of water rise up, sweep on in a majestic curve, and then topple over in a creamy, frothy cataract as it broke on the shoal below.

There was a place, however, near the dark cliffs where a rugged mass of rock jutted out from the base, where the water did not break. I steered for this spot.

There had been a fresh breeze outside, but as the little ship came dancing towards the critical point, the wind died right away, leaving the sails to flop all over the place.

This state of affairs did not make steering easy.

Fortunately we carried sufficient way on to reach the shallowest part, and the swell heaved us over the rest. Then the breeze came again as we opened a pretty bay on our left, and sent us spinning up the land-locked waters which lead to Salcombe.

This lovely little natural harbour is now well known to most of the cruising fraternity, but when I first entered it I don't think its beauties were so well known or appreciated. The tides run strong in the usual anchorages, which are either off or a little above the hotel, or else further up round the point on the east, or Portlemouth, side; but I prefer to go further up still and anchor right round the next, or west, point, where the tides are less strong and the shelter is perfect, although it is further to row ashore.

I ought to remember Salcombe well, for the next year it was very nearly seeing the end of me. But that yarn has been told already elsewhere.

From Salcombe to Falmouth no event occurred worth notice, except that I explored the Erme, the Avon, and the Yealm rivers, with more or less success. I can't say I made much of the two former, but the last-named river is not difficult if one takes the best of the flood tide. The scenery is very sweet and secluded.

Fowey caused me a little anxiety, as I had to enter it for the first time in the dark, and I couldn't make out the leading light.

The book of sailing directions I had gave the leading light as red, but do what I would, approach as dangerously near as I did to either side of the cliffs outside, I couldn't see a red light. All I did see was what I took for a rather brilliant riding light on some big craft, dodging and swinging behind the forestay.

At last I ceased trying to look for it, and just managed to creep in and moor alongside a fishing boat before the tide turned.

In the morning I found we were in a very good berth, and I also learnt that the leading light had been changed during the last month from a red to an occulting white light.

All this time the fat boy was doing well. He grew more and more plump, and never growled or grumbled at anything.

What a comfort is a happy disposition and an inert mind, which delights to chew the cud of absolute vacuity rather than meditate on possible achievements!

Before my cruises were over I had two boys that did the

latter. The achievement of one was to imbibe whiskey inordinately, stealing mine whenever he could get it ; of the other, to lie on every possible occasion.

We did not spend much time in talking, the fat boy and I ; but he always had a pleasant if vacant smile when I did make a remark, and did not shirk his work much. The severest trial he ever had was on our way back from the Scillies.

Until the return voyage began all had gone well. Falmouth, Helford, pleasantest of creeks and easiest of anchorages, Penzance, and Mounts Bay had all been visited.

We did have a bad time thrashing round the Lizard, and the poor lad found the jib sheets more than he could manage then, with very disastrous results to the jib sheets, as well as his hands and arms.

After that day those ropes were no good. I had to put new ones on. It is surprising what a wriggling, writhing, agonised bunch of shreds the sheet does become when the jib takes command in a strong wind.

Some people like Penzance Dock : some people like an east wind, a rough sea, and many other forms of discomfort. Perhaps if I had had one single day when I wasn't required to move my berth for some other craft, or when I didn't either get the waves or the coal dust from a collier unloading alongside, over me, I might have liked Penzance.

When it blows hard the spray flies over the outside berth in the dock in a very moist way ; and as for colliers, Penzance is not likely to run short of coals, seemingly. I really thought they were starting a coal mine, as I was told tin had given out.

If anyone wishes to promote a coal company down there, I am quite willing to write a report on the excellence and

abundance of the coal. It would be more reliable than many an expert's opinion on a South African or West Australian venture.

Naturally, having reached Penzance, it would never do not to discover the Scilly Islands.

Scepticism has ever been the bane of my character. I well remember the feeling I had when I first crossed the Channel quite alone. There was a kind of wonder if I should really find France where it was said to be, and the sight of the cliffs appearing at last above the horizon came as a sort of surprise.

I determined to see if the Scillies were about the place they ought to be.

It was four o'clock on a dark October morning when I started. We hauled out of Penzance Dock, and with a very light wind managed to make Mouse Hole before day broke.

There was a stillness over the sea which meant peace of mind and body, even if it did not promise a rapid realisation of the whereabouts of the Scillies.

By breakfast-time, however, we were not far from the Runnel Stone. The melancholy ding-dong came muffled over the water. We were about a mile south of it.

This end of England is not a magnificent promontory. The rugged granite cliffs are only picturesque when seen quite close.

Land's End itself is a poor, low kind of headland, drooping towards the sea as if the perpetual fight against winds and waves was almost too much for it.

The outlying defences are very rugged and weather-worn. The Longships and its attendant satellites are more suggestive of the wild storms they have to endure than grand or picturesque in themselves.

We drifted on our course as nearly as I could keep the old vessel.

The Wolf Rock lighthouse was conspicuous on our port. The audacity of attempting to build such a work was what most struck me. This lighthouse, as well as that of Skerryvore and the one the Northern Lights commissioners are



ROLLING IN THE ATLANTIC SWELL—SCILLIES IN THE DISTANCE.

building on Sule Skerry, seem to me the acme of engineering and human achievement over the more brutal forces of nature; but perhaps the Wolf Rock is the greatest feat of all, because the rock is a tidal rock, and it was only possible to work at low water and during quiet weather.

After a long drift, for the breeze had almost entirely died

away, I thought I saw a cluster of fishing boats, or craft of some kind, low down on the western horizon.

I watched them very carefully. Certainly there was something. It did not look like land; only detached specks, and a thicker shadow here and there.

I had no idea what the Scilly Islands would look like. I had a notion they would be mostly like other land, more or less bold and high, appearing over the sea like a cloud, perhaps, but still unmistakably land.

As we rolled heavily in the breezeless swell, it was an hour before I could make out this strange cluster, looking just like a fleet of fishing vessels, with lowered sails and riding to their nets.

Presently behind this mass I could see undoubted land—a long, low shadow to the south, and another behind this patch to the north. There was no doubt—I had at last discovered the Scillies, and they were no longer a myth.

The boy showed only a polite interest in the matter, for he was intent on preparing dinner. So long as he got his meals regularly and went to bed at the right time, all else came as a matter of indifference.

At last I was out in the Atlantic, at last I had reached the furthest limit of our shores, and I was surprised to find how still the sea was. Since that time, I have discovered that for small craft the worst sea is that of the Channel. The hardy Corinthians who navigate Sea Reach, the Swin, or from the Foreland to the Wight, will meet nothing worse the further they go—except in such races as frolic about Portland and kindred headlands.

Still it remained a glassy calm. I despaired of making St. Mary's before dark.

The cluster of dark objects, however, was disintegrating.

I could distinguish isolated blocks ; I could not make this out at all. Never having seen groups of rocks from any great distance, and having no definite idea of the appearance of the Scillies, it came as a surprise to find that there were numberless little islands nothing more than isolated rocks—steep, many of them, and of all shapes. I saw afterwards some of them were grassy on their western side, but no verdure was discernible as I approached from the east.

One pyramidal rock stood out conspicuously like a sentinel. It was about eighty or ninety feet high, and almost precipitous all round.

Behind this were many islets overlapping each other, but still fairly distinct. To the south stretched a long ridge-like island with a tower on it, and there was another similar island to the north, only not so long, and with a striped sea mark or tower on the extreme point northward. This was St. Martin's Island, and that to the south was St. Mary's.

Obviously I was steering too much for the centre of the cluster. I have often realised how strong is the temptation to aim for what is seen, not for the unseen. Faith, not sight, is what one ought to be guided by when making a new land.

There is a passage among these islets to the east called Crow Sound, and I came back by it ; but it is not safe for a total stranger to take this course, especially at the state of tide I should probably find on arriving at the entrance. So I made for the southern point of land, which I discovered afterwards was Peninnis Head.

There were still fully ten miles to sail.

It was now seven o'clock. By no possibility could I get to a safe anchorage before dark.

There is something eminently exasperating in the way

the sails, gear, and heavy boom, go banging and straining all over the ship, as she swings and lurches and plunges in the long roll of the Atlantic.

Evidently the cross-tides from the Bristol and English Channels cause an unusually nasty motion just halfway between the Longships and the Scillies.

As I sat sipping my tea and longing for a breeze I thought the tangled maze of rocks had grown much more distinct.

St. Mary's Island, St. Martin, too, were far more defined. There was a hard look along the horizon, and a dark streak of blue was stretching along the western sea.

I should soon have a breeze.

It was true. Suddenly a delicious "cool" stroked my cheek, like the tenderest caress of a fond hand.

The sails rustled and became still. The boom jerked, and ceased to nag at the main sheet as if it would pull it to pieces, for all the world like a spoilt child fretfully worrying a patient mother. Peace and quietness reigned around. The ship leant over. The rudder woke up to a sense of responsibility. Order and work once more resumed their sway.

In another half-hour I was close to the land, steering for a low, jagged, strange-looking wall of rock, at the south-west end of St. Mary's.

Presently, through the gloaming—for the sun had set, and a glorious glow spread up from the west, throwing the low outline of the tangled land into mellow relief, as of softest purple shadow—a little speck came dancing over the sea towards me.

"Do you want a pilot, captain?" hailed a voice.

"How much?" I replied laconically.

"Ten shillings."

I shook my head. I did not really want any help, but if the charge was moderate, I did not feel I should be doing right to refuse it, as it was undoubtedly very risky to enter St. Mary's Sound and pick up a berth in St. Mary's Road in the dark, and without any knowledge whatever of the place; but I wished very much to try.

I shook my head. "Too much. Take five shillings."

"Can't do it for less," was the answer, and we slipped on swiftly towards the sharp headland beyond, inwardly rejoiced at the unaccommodating reply.

The fat boy was licking his lips, and beaming with contentment: he had just made a record tea. He knew I had taken on board a fresh dozen of Swiss milk. He had no anxieties. I have often marvelled at the trustfulness of those who go sailing with me. They seem quite to take it for granted that I must know all about it.

They little know, poor confiding ones!

But still, no one has suffered yet.

* * * * *

Just then I saw a thing that made me pensive.

A few yards only on my right, something black was showing occasionally in the water. So low and small was it that the sea did not break over it, although I saw it was not floating.

Then I knew it was the rock called the Gillstone, and I understood how very dangerous this archipelago of submerged land could be.

This rock lies almost in a straight line to Peninnis Head and is quite in the course of a careless navigator making for St. Mary's Roads from the east.

The sight of a sunken rock so close and lying so quiet

and low, like Brer Rabbit, causes one unaccustomed to this sort of thing to reflect.

If this head is scarcely showing, and will probably be quite covered directly, how many more heads may there be within a few feet of the surface, ready to entrap the unwary?

In France, I discovered that they usually mark the most obtrusive dangers: not so in the Scilly Islands or along the West Coast of Scotland, or Wales.

As far as I remember, there are only three, or at most four, buoys, and about as many beacons, to mark all the dangers among the Scillies. In fact, St. Mary's Sound is the only really well-marked approach. Crow Sound, the other passage most frequently used in entering from the eastward, might well have a little more attention.

It was growing very dim.

The jagged and serrated edge of Peninnis looked as if cut out of brown paper or cardboard, and reminded me of the pasteboard or canvas mountains which surround the Earl's Court grounds. I found afterwards that this rugged promontory is extremely narrow. Suddenly the dark mass ended, and I saw a broad lane of water leading to the northward.

On the other side of this Sound was Gugh Island, and some distance ahead was the dim shadow of Samson and myriads of rocks lying to the west of that island and Bryher.

It was growing more and more difficult to distinguish objects. I knew there were at least three dangers in St. Mary's Sound, mostly lying in the middle, but there was one marked as being a little too pushing in its disposition on the right, or St. Mary's side. On this a pole beacon had been placed.

I looked out anxiously for this.

We were spinning along beautifully now. The sea was mostly land-locked or rock-locked, and the fresh northerly air sent us merrily through the smooth water.

Suddenly I saw a black pole close alongside of me. It was the beacon I had been looking for, and we were past that danger. Then I lost sight of all objects, except the great light of St. Agnes close by on the left, and that of St. Martin away in the north-east. The Bishop's Rock, too, most audacious of lighthouses, was glowing brilliantly in the west.

No other lights could I see, nor any land at all.

After standing on in the darkness as far as I judged prudent, I went about, took in the topsail, and saw that all was ready for letting go the anchor.

Then I wondered where St. Mary's lay.

I took the tiller and listened for the jib to flap. I could see nothing, but steered as close on the wind as I could.

I knew I was among many rocks, and thought of the Gillstone, with all its possibilities.

Suddenly a voice hailed, "Yacht ahoy!"

It was startlingly close.

"Hullo!" I shouted.

"We've come to take yer in."

"That's very kind," I answered politely. "But what's it going to cost me?"

"Five shillings."

"But I'm nearly there. I can anchor anywhere I like now."

"Well, but you ain't at the port yet."

"Perhaps not, but it's not worth five shillings. I'll give you half-a-crown."

"We ain't a-goin' to work for nothin'."

"All right. Good night!" I called back.

I was evidently in the channel, and held on.

Presently I saw a light on my right, then a black object quite close. This was either a rock or a buoy.

I luffed up and sounded. I had three fathoms.

"Let go!" I called out, and away rattled anchor and chain.

It was past ten, so I turned in, leaving the big red light glowing and blinking over St. Martin's in the north-east

When I woke next morning there was a sound of wobbling as of the sea against a clinker-built boat. A voice hailed, "Yacht ahoy!"

It was the inevitable coastguard.

From him I learned that I couldn't have brought up in a better place; that he knew I must have been there before, or I never could have found my way in; and he wound up by wanting to know where my crew was, as he saw no hands.

"Why," I exclaimed, pointing with pride to the fat boy, "what more do you want?"

The fat boy seemed sticky and shiny about the mouth and cheeks. I knew what it was, but he looked healthy withal, if a little flabby.

"Oh, that's it," said the coastguard, after a short pause. He seemed surprised, as if it wasn't usual to have thirty-ton yachts come out to the Scillies with only one man and a boy, and both somewhat amateurish.

Then he left, and I examined the Scilly Isles. It was a curious and rather unexpected view. Close to me on the left was a pile of tangled rocks, with not much seaweed on them, ending in a few low heads just showing above the sea.

From these rocks the shore rose in a long gentle slope of

close-cropped turf, more or less brown, to a grey building on the top, evidently a fortification of some kind, and apparently mostly of ancient date. This was "the Garrison," or "star" castle, the one defence of the whole group of islands, and erected in 1592.

From this point the land sloped to a low neck connecting the castle with Hugh Town, the capital of the islands. Here the pier or jetty, the only shelter for the bay, which serves as the best harbour in the islands, but which is dry for the most part at low tide, extends seawards. There is about six or eight feet of water at the end of the pier, but the depth shoals rapidly, and only just allows the steamer from Penzance to lie afloat alongside.

On the whole it struck me that remarkably little had been done to make any efficient shelter for vessels running here for protection. As a matter of fact most vessels would rather keep the sea than run into St. Mary's Roads, where a very heavy swell rolls in during westerly gales.

Behind the harbour was a curious kind of scaffolding, the meaning of which I could not understand; it looked rather like an exaggerated guillotine. This I discovered afterwards was a big "weather glass." It was worked from the real one in the garrison, and as the board went up or down, so the passing craft could tell the weather forecast. Hugh Town looked straggling and poor, but the whiteness of the strand round the bay, and on all the necks or banks connecting the mouldering granite torrs, or carns, as they call them here, was most remarkable.

These sandy beaches of the Scillies are marvellous in their glistening whiteness. I think what struck me most in the domains of Mr. Dorrien Smith was the extreme cleanliness, purity, and wholesomeness of the islands.

From the north-east end of St. Mary's the scene was little else than a confused mass of rocks of all sizes and heights, from a square foot to an acre, perhaps, and from two or three feet above water to some eighty feet.

The picturesque group of the eastern islands was entirely, or almost, hidden. The long back of St. Martin's, with its sea mark, shut in the view to the north and overlapped Tresco, which in turn seemed to be connected on the west to Bryher and Samson. Then came more innumerable rocks, over and against which the long swell of the Atlantic was surging ceaselessly.

After a wide, clear expanse of water, showing how very exposed St. Mary's Roads would be in a gale from the west or north-west, came more ugly heads of rocks, with a larger island only just showing round the north-west corner of St. Mary's. On the rocks was a magnificent lighthouse.

The Bishop Rock is another of those audacious feats of engineering or architectural skill.

There is something very noble in thus turning the most dangerous enemy the sailor has into his best friend. It is a kind of conversion so eminently Christian, that it strikes one even more, perhaps, than the sight of one of those brands saved from the burning in the shape of converted blacks, who figure so frequently at missionary meetings.

The conversion of the Wolf and Bishop Rocks was a costly business, but at least it has been sincere and effectual. It is a very real conversion.

After this comprehensive survey I had breakfast, enjoying it with an additional gusto as I considered how we had managed an undoubtedly risky piece of navigation in the dark without any harm.

Then I resolved to find a safer shelter, for, unlike that

prototype of single-handed and amateur sailors, Mr. Macmullen, I love snug nooks and out-of-the-way corners, and am never so happy as when finding my way into obscure passages. I met a man the other day with just the same tastes. "There's a ditch; let's go up it." This so exactly coincided with my views that we instantly became friends.

I consulted the chart.

The only really safe anchorages seemed to me to be on the two sides of Tresco. Here were sounds sheltered from almost every wind; one—that to the west—rejoiced in the name of New, while that to the east was called Old Grimsby.

I decided on trying to find my way into the former shelter. Obviously the safest way was to go out round the west of the islands and enter from the north, where there was a narrow sound of deep water.

The whole of the south entrance was encumbered with rocks, reefs, and sandbanks, and nearly dried out at low water, having only about two or three feet in pools and patches.

I resolved to pick my way into New Grimsby through this tortuous channel.

It was about low water. I stood over under main and foresail only, until I shoaled to about ten feet, and was close to a low, small rock. The wind was off shore—that is, northerly—so it was clear I should have to turn through this intricate channel, of which there were no signs whatever as yet.

I stood on until I had only a foot of water under the keel, but the water was so clear I could see the clean sandy bottom perfectly. Then I hauled down the foresail and dropped anchor.

Clearly I had better explore in the dinghy. I did so, and found a very shallow track winding among low rocks. All these would be covered as soon as there was water enough for the yacht, and there was nothing to show their whereabouts. This necessitated taking bearings of objects on the islands, and I made a note or two with a rough sketch plan. Then I went back to the yacht.

The tide had now risen sufficiently to allow me to sail into the entrance of the sound, and after twice more anchoring and reconnoitring, I got through all right, and dropped anchor in about ten feet low water, a little to the north of New Grimsby Bay.

This anchorage is very charming, I think. It has all the fascination of being lonely and wild with the added sense of security. It is the best and only real shelter in all gales in the Scilly Isles. I should imagine, however, that if a violent gale should get up at the period of the highest spring tides there must be a very heavy swell even here. As it was I rolled a good deal in the fresh breeze which blew down the sound between Bryher and Treco.

Large yachts mostly bring up in St. Mary's Roads, and St. Mary's Island is the best known of the group, but it is not by any means the most interesting to my mind; others very likely, however, may think differently.

Tresco possesses an absolutely unique garden, a veritable *jardin d'acclimatation*, which is living evidence of the mildness of the climate. Winds are the only noxious things. Once out of the range of their scorching breath, any plant seems to thrive admirably.

Naturally, as in all wind-blown places, trees are not much in evidence, except at Treco, where a fine plantation skirts the drive to the Abbey.

It was on my return from the Scillies that I met with the narrowest escape from shipwreck I have ever had.

The morning I left the Scillies there was a light N.N.W. breeze, so light as scarcely to have strength enough to enable the yacht to stem the tide running through the back way into New Grimsby.

Two coasters, the only vessels apparently left in the Scillies, also made a start of it. One went out by St. Mary's Sound and I never saw any more of her; and the other came through Crow Sound as I did.

When the Eastern Islands were cleared, and we had an offing of about three miles, it fell dead calm. So it remained all day. The glass steadily fell, heavy clouds came up from the west, and I fully expected when the storm did come it would be from that quarter.

All day we rolled in the long glassy swell which came from the Seven Stones. It was a leaden sea and sky, sullen and sad-looking. By sunset, although no sunlight was visible, a lurid glare flushed over the west. No wind came as yet.

The fat boy had enjoyed his tea and was placidly sleeping on deck.

I looked at the topsail and jib. No sign of a draw anywhere. It seemed as if we should have to drift about all night.

The Seven Stones lightship had lighted up, yet not a breath of air stirred. The lurid glow had died away, leaving a livid pall of cloud, spread above a pallid sea. The storm was only biding its time. Its presence brooded over the ocean and was felt in the very silence. Before it became too dark, I took in the topsail, and prepared for squalls—that is, I went carefully through the cabins, and saw that all was secure. Then I lighted the side lights and saw to the reefing gear being all ready.

By nine o'clock a very light breeze got up right ahead. Then it began to rain, and I knew the fun would come presently.

As the breeze then was, the nearest point I could get to the course would only bring me to the Wolf Rock.

The rain came on thicker than ever, and the wind piped up. The night was very dark. The sea, too, began to get up, and very soon we were staggering and plunging in the regular style. It was a dead beat to windward to make England.

After a couple of hours of this, during which time the fat boy slept happily, and I grimly wondered how much worse it was going to be, I found we were meeting heavier seas than I cared about, and being then some two miles to the north of the Wolf Rock, as I judged, I went about and thrashed along on the starboard tack.

But the seas didn't seem to get any smaller, and at last, after an unusually staggering splasher which swept the deck entirely, I determined to go below and see how things were in the cabin, for I knew many knick-knacks, and pictures even, might be getting adrift, and a good deal of damage done.

I called the boy and told him to mind the helm, just keeping her sails full and no more, and to be sure and call me if he saw any light.

It was what is commonly called pitch dark. Only the glow from the side lights showed any ropes or rigging in the fore-part of the vessel.

I gave a last look round. All seemed right, and then I went below.

It was as I thought. The cabin was in a vile mess. The driving rain and spray had found its way down below, and the straining of the heavy seas had caused the old boat to

take in a good deal of water. The cabin floor was a pond which dashed from side to side as the vessel lurched and plunged with each sea and heavier squall. The noise of the sluicing water and the sight of charts, books, papers, crockery, and many other knick-knacks, all floating or jumbled up in the dirty bilge water, was alike dismal.

Every now and then a sound like thunder, accompanied by a violent blow which caused everything in the cabin to shake and groan, could be heard, followed by a heavy drenching noise on deck, and a rush of water found its way under the skylight somehow, and into the forecastle down the hawse-pipe.

This state of things was deplorable in any well-regulated boat. I set to work to remedy what I could, picking up the various articles washing about in the water, and wedging all things securely for the unusual trial that was being put upon their stability.

Then I went into the forecastle. Here confusion was even worse confounded. Gradually, however, I substituted for chaos at least a semblance to order. All this had taken time.

Suddenly it occurred to me to lift the fore hatch, and see what the sea was like in the bow, and how the lamps were burning. I had scarcely lifted the cover, when I gave a shout and scrambled on deck.

"Put down the helm! Hard a-port!" I shouted, as I let go the weather jib-sheet.

The good old boat hurtled up into the wind. I had never known her fail at a pinch. Everything rattled as if it would go to pieces; but round we came, and paid off into the darkness again to listen for the knell of the Runnel Stone bell buoy.

It was the narrowest shave of utter smash I have ever had. I have never met with such a shock before or since.

What I saw was this—There right above me, as it seemed, was a huge black wall. It was something blacker than the night, denser, more solid. There was no mistaking what it was. As I let go the sheet, and watched the bows come plunging round, a danger suddenly discovered itself scarcely two fathoms from the end of the bowsprit, indeed, the end of it seemed to dip into the spray.

Spouting up in masses of almost luminous white were the Atlantic waves, breaking on a rock only a few yards ahead. Another moment's delay in the forecastle, and the voyages of the *Lady Harvey* would have been ended; perhaps also the fat boy would have ceased to care for Swiss milk. His nature was so placid and inoffensive, that it is to be hoped he will always find as harmless and comforting an equivalent elsewhere.

The land was the peninsula of Tol-pedn-penwith, the most south-westerly of the promontories forming Land's End. Then I saw a red light on the starboard as we stood out to sea, and I knew we had run into danger carelessly. I couldn't blame the boy, although I had cautioned him to keep a good lookout for any lights. The sails hid the side on which the light was showing, and it was almost impossible, leaning over as the vessel was, to see under it. It was not to be expected that the sleepy lad would keep the same anxious lookout I always did.

I knew that we must pass very close to the Runnel Stone, but could not tell on which side we should have it.

Presently as I strained my ears anxiously to catch any sound, I heard one melancholy "dong," and I knew we were very close to the buoy on the lee-side. The sound was literally a passing bell.

The rest of the night was spent in a hard tussle with the

weather. When day broke the sight was as dreary a one as could be. A heavy, leaden, breaking sea, a sea no steering could keep from breaking on board; for the tide was churning against a cold and blustery wind, roaring from the nipping east.

The wind was right ahead. Under the lee was an iron-bound coast, bleak and forbidding in the driving rain; the smoke from a steamer was the only sign of any other vessel. Not even a fishing craft was in sight.

I saw that during the night we had made some progress, though I had lain-to for the latter part of it.

As far as I could make out we were nearly abreast of Paul Church, and a little to the west of Mouse Hole, or Muzzle, as the little village plundered by the Spaniards at the cost of brave Squire Keigwin's life is familiarly called.

In another hour I was off Penzance, and in spite of the onshore wind, I ran in between the piers, not sorry to take shelter alongside the Scilly Island mail boat.

The rest of the day was spent in tidying up. It took some time to pump the old boat dry, and a rogue on board one of the craft lying in dock took the opportunity of my being dead tired to steal the mainsail cover off the deck that night. It was useless putting it on the sodden sail, and so the theft was easy.

From Penzance we had a glorious sail by moonlight to Falmouth, and here I laid up the old *Lady Harvey*, after a very successful cruise.

The fat boy returned to Dartmouth, and I am sorry to say I have neither seen nor heard anything of him since. Next to the boy from Plymouth, the Dartmouth lad was a long way the most successful of all my "crews."

Cruise IX.

"Infames Scopulos Acrocerannia."

I HAVE had many misgivings while writing the previous yarns.

I said to myself often, "My good man, if you took up a book written all in the first person, and simply chronicling such small beer as you have done, you would describe book and writer very briefly."

I quite feel this, and all I can plead in excuse is but very lame truly.

It is the old excuse of Adam, or nearly so. I can only try and shift the blame to others ; not, however, in this case to the opposite sex—for not one of the fair creatures, I feel quite sure, has the slightest interest in such a subject—but to the shoulders of that rugged class which can well bear any such slight burden.

It is owing to the surprise, incredulity often, and sometimes derision, of seafaring men that the idea of writing down a few personal adventures occurred to me.

Originally I never thought there was anything remarkable in going about practically single-handed. I saw nothing odd in it. It seemed to me, if one could manage it, by far the most delightful way of enjoying coasting, unless indeed one were fortunate enough to pick up a fair

companion, as so many happy Corinthians appear able to do—one who is as much at home with the tiller and ropes as the skipper himself, and is above and besides all a gentle sharer of all the joys and excitements of cruising as well as a comforter, and sweet refinement in the midst of rather rough work at times.

To me such luck has not been given, nor have I found, as a man well known for an adventurous sailor, as well as a most original designer of novel craft, once said to me he was always hoping to find, that ideal Princess of Thule who should be the guiding star and sweet companion of a hardy Corinthian's life.

Alas, poor Yorick! This bold sailor met a watery grave without, so far as I know, ever fulfilling his quest, and—well, it is idle to prognosticate, however strong may be one's convictions.

It first was forced upon me that there was something to arouse remark when I found how surprised were the official and professional world on my putting into a strange port.

Many a time the coastguard has put off to offer assistance, thinking I had lost my crew.

I never read, until the other day, Mr. MacMullen's book, and the impression left after getting through his narrative is not a happy one. He always seems to have had trouble, either with his anchors or something else. He never seems to have been quite happy. Of course, as his usual anchorages were well out at sea or in a bad tide-way, such a result might be expected.

I should be very sorry indeed if anyone should go away with the impression that single-handed sailing is therefore melancholy.

People ask if one is not lonely. As a matter of fact, I think a single-handed sailor need be less lonely almost than any Corinthian. Solitude lies entirely in his choice. Many a time I have wished for more of it. One can always have as many companions as one wants, at least so I have found.

The kind hospitality of the many acquaintances all round the coast is very present with me. I have often regretted that Nature instilled an instinctive shrinking from society into my veins.

The single-handed Corinthian need never be dull. Indeed, a more amusing way of spending a holiday could hardly be found. The adventurer has the peripatetic experiences of a *Pickwick* combined with the joys of a navigator—I had almost said of an Alpine climber, for, indeed, they more resemble the personality of such adventures, although differing in kind. Certainly, too, he can share in the thrilling delight of a Columbus when he first discovered a new world, or of a Cook when he gave to civilisation the Sandwich Islands.

But I am wandering from the apology I was trying to make for writing these yarns.

It is only the fact that other people seem surprised at what they call the "nerve" which anyone, in their opinion, must have who handles so large a boat even as my present one, that justifies the egotism of this book. And now I come to think of it, the justification does not seem to me sufficient. I wish I had not undertaken the matter.

The more I sail about the more hardy Corinthians I meet who handle their craft admirably; but I find even among these skilful seamen a sense of wonder at my

liking to sail as I do, and I think also at the ease with which it is done.

The more I hear the yarns of others, the more I certainly do think I have been lucky. It was only the other day I was listening to how some Corinthians got hopelessly ashore in Lough Carlingford, a place where it is truly very easy to accomplish this feat, but which seemed to me, when I first anchored in that lovely piece of water, the very beau ideal of a small-boat sailor's paradise.

It must be confessed these men had my book of Sailing Directions on board, but it is astonishing how stupid some people can be. I know I never got ashore myself—at least, if I did I have forgotten to record it.

Of all my cruises I look back to the exploration of the coasts of Brittany from Abervrach to Noirmoutiers with the greatest satisfaction, and the cruise from Fowey to Aberdovey in Wales—indeed, all the cruise up the West Coast of England—as the most risky, because a single-handed sailor is most at the mercy of the weather, with few easy shelters to make for, especially in that part of the Irish Sea below Kingstown and Holyhead.

The curious thing is that no one cautioned me against this latter cruise, but everyone stared aghast when I said I was going to cross from Falmouth to Brest; especially did the watermen of Falmouth express their opinions pretty freely.

A study, too, of the charts of that part of the French coast does not re-assure a nervous person. There seem rocks innumerable. Not only are there rocks skirting the coast for miles out to sea, but all the entrances to the many ports are simply barricaded with sunken heads, reefs, and patches of rocks.

All this is sufficiently obvious, so much so that it hardly needs the severe warnings of official books against the terrible risks from the heavy seas which suddenly get up, the awful currents, the tide races, eddies, fogs, etc., for really this coast would seem to abound with all the terrors natural phenomena can cause, if one may believe authorities.

When I heard, and read, and saw all this I did feel decidedly nervous. The very first experience of the dangers, too, would have to be made in precisely the most perilous part.

I intended to make for the Chenal du Four, a narrow sound beset with sunken rocks, between Ushant and the mainland. Since I explored this coast the whole locality has been much written about in the papers, owing to the interest taken in these dreary islets on account of the wreck of the steamship *Drummond Castle*.

The entrance to this apparently wide channel is really barely five miles wide, as the rocks of Porsal encroach on the east, and the outlying reefs and heads of rock forming the north-east end of the Ushant archipelago encumber it on the west, leaving many intricate but deep channels in between. Through these sounds the tides rush with great velocity, causing the sea, as is natural, to be extremely violent when the wind is opposed to the current.

Knowing all this, I will confess that I looked upon this cruise as the most risky I could contemplate. I was warned over and over again not to attempt it—at least, not to attempt it as I intended. At any rate I ought to have two men and a boy, and certainly someone who knew the coast. No coaster even would attempt to navigate such waters without a local pilot.

I remembered that the vessel which went out to the

Scilly Islands the day before I did had taken a man from Penzance, so this was probably true.

I had, however, resolved, if possible, to do all my cruising alone, without any professional help, and I had as yet never met with any difficulties beyond my strength or capacity to manage.

As yet, I had no cabin boy. I was quite alone, living mostly in Helford Creek, in the most sheltered as well as most picturesque part of it, called Porth Navas.

To me there is a wonderful charm about these South Cornish inlets. Their ramifications are endless. There is frequently not over-much water, it is true, but usually there is sufficient for some distance up their mazy windings, and an old-world, far-away time, redolent of the knights of Lyonesse and all the primitive prowess of a half mythologic age, pervades all of them.

I was to find just such a land across the water, just such creeks and mazy inlets, only more mysterious, more romantic, because of the more obvious relics of a cultured life—a life of castles and abbeys, of forest and field, a life which, as it appears through the glamour of long ago, perhaps never really existed as the mind of romance would have it, but which yet must have been very noble, very joyous, and full of high thoughts and brave deeds, if mingled oftentimes with terrible wrong and awful cruelty.

I had brought down from London with me a boy off the *Exmouth* training ship. He was very like my second boy in appearance, and looked as if he would have the same faults; I can't remember if the other had any virtues.

The first day's sail, from Flushing to Milor Quay, caused many doubts. The boy found the motion from the Truro steamer rather too much for him. The fact is, he wanted

to be back at Falmouth. It is the same with all these boys off industrial ships. They cannot bear being away from the town, from society, from the mixture of harsh severity (which lasts only a short time, however), with the hours of loafing and idling which fill up the rest of their life.

I have asked others, and their experience is the same. I believe now and then a good boy can be picked up, but it is rare.

The next day this boy caused me the only smash I have ever had. We had actually started for France. I had all my papers in order, the bill of health duly signed by the French consul, and I was hoping to make Ushant light that night, for the wind was fresh from the north-east, and we should make short miles of it.

We had cleared St. Anthony's Head, and were running finely before the strong breeze, when I noticed the mainsheet was pinned in too much.

I told the boy to ease it off gently, when to my horror I saw the whole mainsheet go, the boom—a fine Oregon spar, thirty feet long—swing violently out, and in an instant snap right in half.

I luffed at once, hauled on the part of the sheet which was not unrove, and tried to get the heavy boom on board.

The boy sat down and cried.

Fortunately Helford Creek was under my lee, and I was able to make it with the head sails only.

Here I remained while a very willing carpenter made me a new boom, and here my boy found life much too dull, and departed.

So I was left, not unhappily, to the solitude of this pretty creek and the kindness of a very hospitable local land-owner, whose genial welcome I shall never forget.

However, time was going, and I meant to make Brest before the summer was over, and not to put off the cruise until too late.



CREW NO. 4.—THE TAMAR.

Before May was out I happened to sail up to Plymouth, and there I met with a waterman loafing on the Hoe. I mentioned to him my need of a boy, and how I intended crossing to Brest.

The result was that a strong, rugged-looking, much-freckled, tough youngster presented himself when next I landed.

This was the son of the waterman. I pointed out the worst side of my expedition, but the boy was urgent, and his father seemed equally anxious that I should take him, so next morning at nine he shipped himself aboard, and we weighed anchor at once.

I put into Helford that evening, landed the carpenter, and then hauled the dinghy on deck. By ten we were off the Manacles again, making the best course possible for Ushant north-eastern light.

That was the pleasantest voyage I have ever made.

All sail had been carried all the day from Plymouth to Helford, and I never shifted a sail, and hardly altered a sheet, from the time they were set off Plymouth Hoe until I dropped anchor in the Basin du Commerce, Brest.

There was a light breeze from the northward all the time. The night was beautiful, moonlit and balmy.

After all the throng of craft which goes ceaselessly up and down the British Channel about ten miles out from our shores was passed, I saw no vessels. Only one ketch,

evidently a Lowestoft smack or Brixham trawler, appeared far away in open channel.

The sun sank in a hazy west, and the light breeze fell with it.

I reckoned we were about twenty-five or thirty miles off Stiff Light, and as the tide was ebbing, I edged more away for the S.E.

The boy had behaved excellently so far. It is true there was nothing for him to do after the usual routine of the morning was over. He enjoyed his meals and slept placidly, for the most part.

By ten, as there was no sign of any light, I was just going to tell the lad to turn in, when I thought I caught sight of a curious kind of flash. I looked very carefully in the direction, which was nearly S.S.W. of me, and saw it again.

I came to the conclusion it was Stiff Light on Ushant.

It fell hazy directly afterwards, and I never saw the light again.

With the light air and ebb tide, I could make small progress, and seeing two large steamers had passed quite close to me, I thought it better to lie-to until I had a little more command of the helm and was rather more certain of my position.

Presently, however, a nice little breeze sprang up, and I headed for where I thought the Four Channel ought to be.

It was then just midnight. At ten the night before I had left the Manacles.

I steered rather easterly of my course until dawn. I had seen no more lights. It was now quite thick. I knew

I was in the neighbourhood of a dangerous coast, and listened attentively.

The breeze blew steadily from the N.N.E. I could see we were travelling well ; if we had been going during the dark at the same rate we must surely be well within Ushant.

Rocks might lie hid anywhere. I listened more and more keenly. The water, too, looked curious. Clearly there was a very strong tide running.

The eddies and swirlings, as of water pent up down below, were unmistakable. The sea was seething and gyrating as it only can do when it is rushing with great velocity over hidden obstructions or in a pent-up course.

I began to get more anxious.

I could see nothing, hear nothing.

The boy was asleep. It was no use waking him.

My fear was that in this fog we should get carried in among the labyrinth of rocks, and entirely lose our way.

This might easily happen. I had once before been caught in a thick fog in just such a place.

I listened harder than ever. I remembered well how my ears had saved me then.

Suddenly I distinctly heard a splash, then a thud, another splash at a regular interval, and I knew it must be someone rowing.

I listened intently. The sea curled and eddied, and welled up in great seething masses. Any moment I might see the ugly head of a rock just showing above the water—worse still, there was every reason to believe that many were lying just below the surface, thus causing this violent state of ebullition in the sea. I listened keenly.

"Why, they're talking," I said, as I distinctly heard

voices close to me, and almost at the same time a little tattered lugger loomed up out of the mist.

The men were rowing across our bows.

"Am I in the Chenal du Four?" I called out in the best French I could command.

"Mais oui, Dâme!" came back the answer, in gruff but polite tones. "Monsieur has but to look and he will see the Four lighthouse in another ten minutes."

This was most consoling, and the ebb tide was carrying us through finely.

The boy had been roused by the voices. He popped his head up through the forehatch.

"Be we in France, zurr?"

"Yes," I said; "you heard them talking French."

"Then I'll soon be able to get some grapes now, won't I?"

It had been a fixed idea with the lad that fruit and grapes were as plentiful as blackberries over here, and I believe this had been one of the main inducements to him to take the berth.

It was now half-past five.

I told the boy to make some tea, and get us a little preliminary breakfast. It was the morning of my second night out. As a matter of fact, since leaving Plymouth at nine two days ago, I had left the tiller very little.

It was rather more than the ten minutes the Breton fishermen told us it would take before we saw the Four lighthouse, but by-and-by its tall tower did loom out of the mist on our port, and I knew we were all right.

Presently we fell in with a whole fleet of tattered luggers. The Plymouth lad looked at them all contemptuously.

"I suld like to see they things in Sutton Peule. Whoi, they ain't fit to drown a cat in."

That boy never got over his inbred contempt for a Frenchman. He had the most lofty ideas of English seamen, above all if they were Plymouth watermen. It was delightful to see the pride he took in his father's boat. Next to a Frenchman, I believe at that time his pet aversion was a Royal Navy man, especially if he had anything to do with the training brigs which manœuvre in the Sound, or the gunboats which practise gunnery outside Rame Head.

He said "they was so uncareful and helpless like, they looked that feulish."

As we passed the Four Rock the fog began to lift.

At first I could not make anything of the scene. I wondered if I were really too tired out and unable to see correctly.

The sea was curling, eddying, and welling up in the same uncomfortable way. I could now see what I took for a beacon ahead of me until I found it twisted and swung with the tide. There were two buoys on each side, and the sea was frothing up in between.

These were close on the right. To the left was a mazy prospect of sea, rocks, or islands, but they had no tops as yet, for the mist had not risen high enough.

Between these rocks were white patches—very white, and shiny almost. I could not make this out until I remembered the white granite sands of the Scilly Isles. Then I knew I was looking at the same kind of strand.

As the mist rose, land appeared behind this bewildering network of outlying rocks—low land, with here and there whitewashed cottages and black-looking long stacks, which I soon recognised as seaweed.

I could see nothing of Ushant, but we were running along very rapidly.

A fresh breeze blew off the land ; the sea sparkled and whirled all round. A steamer came puffing up behind, but did not come down our channel. She passed astern of us, and I saw by the chart she was going through the Fromveur channel, between Ushant and the other islands of the archipelago.

Perhaps it was through this very channel the *Drummond Castle* meant to go, for it is one frequently used by vessels, but mostly by those bound down to Bordeaux or the Spanish ports in the Bay.

We were now coming to a very nasty part of the channel, where rocks contract it to only a quarter of a mile and barely that ; and here, as ill luck would have it, the tide turned against us.

It was the highest of the May spring tides, and the streams ran their hardest.

I had no more sail to put up. We were already, and had been since leaving Plymouth, carrying all we could pack on.

A very high tower inland had caught my attention for some time. It stood not far from the edge of a fine bay.

"Here," I thought, "if the tide is too much, we will run in and drop anchor." Only I did not much like deviating from the main channel, which was admirably buoyed and beaconsed, for fear of other sunken rocks which might not be so carefully pointed out.

Ahead I could see another tall lighthouse on the extreme edge of a precipitous headland, with a gaunt pile of monastic-looking ruins beside it.

Abeam of the yacht a largish-looking town was opening up, with another lighthouse, also very tall. The wealth of Brittany in lighthouses is astonishing.

There were at least four, each as high as the Eddystone, and how many more there were of course I could not say, although it was quite clear there were none of those apologies for lights such as so modestly figure in little wooden sentry boxes at Poole entrance.

I doubt if the commerce of Brest is equal to that of Poole, but of course its importance lies in its position as one of the first naval ports of France.

I found afterwards, however, that even little fishing harbours are equally well treated, and that it is no uncommon thing to see three fine towers and powerful lights taking care of several acres of rocks and two or three cottages. This, too, in a channel far remote from ocean traffic, and which can only be of interest locally.

Then, again, the harbour and jetty accommodation is everywhere abundant as well as solid.

The town I was passing was Le Conquet—memorable in English history for the death of the English Lord High Admiral Howard, who was burnt on board his ship during an engagement here.

On the whole the fleets of Henry VIII. seem to have had their work cut out for them all through his reign, and were twice at least unable to prevent French descents on our coasts, in spite of the fortifications Henry erected along the South Coast, forts which were the precursors of the later Martello Towers.

It is a curious fact that at both the periods when a French invasion was most imminent, Italian engineers should have been employed to defend our coasts—Giannibelli during the 16th century, and Martello in the 19th.

As I opened Le Conquet I was aware of a prodigious tide against me. The sea was boiling and seething in that

cauldron-like way it has when the spring tides are running their hardest over rocky and uneven ground.

Another thing also was very evident: that was the presence of two dangers, with little room to pass between. A black buoy, one of the tall spar or spire buoys, which were new to me, and which I had at first taken for a beacon, was close on the port-hand, and a fine large stone beacon, painted brightly in red and black bands, equally close on the starboard.

Between these two the tide was running a race harder than ever John Gilpin ran.

A French pilot boat was ahead. I watched her steering now this way, now that. At last she managed to get through, and I thought if she could the old *Lady Harvey* ought to be able to.

A steamer came thrashing and churning by with her propeller just showing above water. It was as much as she could do, apparently, to stem the furious current.

A spring tide at its strongest ebbing under London Bridge gives a good idea of what this stream was like.

There is a monotony on the whole about this kind of thing. The incidents and excitements are much the same; but for really downright hazard give me a rush through the Swellies in the Menai Straits when your ideas of the place are the vaguest and your command of the helm vaguer. Loch Strangford, too, can provide a little emotion, as can also the sounds about Scarba.

By midday all the dangers of the Four Channel were passed and the fine vestibule to the magnificent Rade de Brest was entered.

The entrance to Brest Harbour is most symmetrically arranged by Nature.

The land on either side, without being very high or romantic in outline, is undulating, as far as can be seen from the deck of a vessel, and not uninteresting.

The actual coast-line is quite attractive, and very similar to the South Cornish coast.

Indeed it must have been this likeness which caused the early Armorican settlers to call the peninsula on the south-west side of the Brest inlet by the name of Cornouaille.

It was a beautiful, warm, hazy afternoon as I entered the Iroise. I knew nothing of the nature of the waters I was visiting. I had read no descriptions, and had only the Admiralty Channel Pilot. The official and colourless details of rocks, lights, and shoals gives one a very meagre idea of what the actual scenery is like; but I prefer this way of finding out a new country or port, as whatever is worthy of notice comes as a surprise, and I find myself constantly seeing things of interest when I am conscious that if I had read of them beforehand I should either have formed quite an exaggerated idea of their importance and been proportionately disappointed, or else have been bored to death at the notion of so many things to see.

As it is, I have the merit of finding the lions for myself, and can mete out a due proportion of interest accompanied with the gratified pride of a discoverer.

One may miss a good deal this way, but what one does find comes with infinitely greater relish.

Afterwards, however, there is a decided pleasure in reading up about the places one has seen, and again one's *amour propre* is gratified at finding how discriminatingly one has used the judgment and curiosity vouchsafed.

As I looked at the south-east of the Iroise, as the large bay or vestibule before the Goulet (or Narrows) which leads

into the Rade de Brest is called, my attention was attracted by some remarkable isolated rocks.

Looming through the haze they looked like veritable giants petrified; I found subsequently, by sailing between them, that the Tas de Pois are not really so high as they appeared at first. But in the haze of that delicious day, these phantoms, dimly white against the warm grey of the vaporous air, were very suggestive.

It was one of those occasions which inspire the imagination and are, as inspirations for after-thoughts, worth hours of reading or slow evolution of unaided picturing.

How much did Turner owe to a mellow memory of early voyagings on the North Sea or along the Dorset coasts! Durdle-door surely inspired some of his grandest marine effects, notably in "Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus"; but Durdle-door would hardly know itself again, so gorgeous and fantastic has it become.

When I entered Brest roadstead, I found the French fleet of evolution anchored in three lines ready to weigh anchor on the receipt of orders.

I had very vague ideas of where I was to anchor, and tacked across the head of the lines to find the Bassin du Commerce. The entrance is well protected against the sea, but it is rather narrow and with an overlap of the outer breakwater, which, as the wind then was, rendered a tack inevitable in the very narrowest part.

Of course it goes without saying that my most difficult work is always when entering a new harbour.

I am obliged to reduce sail to a minimum, as I have no time or force available to do this in time otherwise.

The result is, that such a big boat as the *Lady Harvey* is turns very slowly, and my command of her becomes

lessened. In spite of this disadvantage, I have never suffered any damage as yet, or caused any to anyone else, but the consciousness of this weakness causes me to seek the most unfrequented and most secluded natural harbours, a choice fortunately also favoured by natural tastes.

In the Rade de Brest there are almost as many delightful anchorages as even Falmouth Harbour possesses, with the added charm of hoary ruins and romantic spots within easy reach, or actually close at hand.

The sun, too, shines brighter in the Breton inlet, I think—at least, so it seemed to me—and after all, it is a hundred miles or so nearer the Equator, which ought to count for something in sunlight.

If the sight of one man handling a craft so large as mine caused remark in the English ports, naturally there was comment in a French one.

“Had I any right to do it?”

“Was I a capitaine de vaisseau?” etc.

As I didn't see this mattered to anyone except myself, I allowed the questions to be answered as they could.

One enthusiastic Brestois, a really very good fellow, owner of a wholesome cutter of about fifteen tons, was quite friendly, and indeed helpful. He lent me the works of M. Bouquet de la Grye, now the President of the Geographical Society of France, on the coasts of Brittany, a work recommended to me by the Naval Aide-de-camp to the Préfet-Maritime, but which I was unable to obtain at any of the booksellers' in Brest.

It is a little strange, perhaps, that this cruise along as dangerous a coast as could be found anywhere in the world should have been the most delightful I have yet enjoyed.

There was absolutely no contretemps.

The navigation among the endless reefs which fringe the coasts of Finisterre, the Morbihan, and the estuaries of the Loire and Vilaine, where the perpetually rushing tides set in countless eddies and currents, not only among the rocks, sunken and otherwise, but also directly over and against them, is unquestionably risky.

If the Breton coast were, like the western coast of Scotland or the Hebrides, left to its own native ruggedness, and the climate equally variable and inclement, I doubt if an amateur could successfully navigate it, with no local help, for the first time, absolutely a stranger to its peculiarities, and with the meagre help afforded him by the Admiralty sheets, compiled mostly from the *Pilote Français*.

I found the chart of the Loire misleading as regards the buoyage, although I had the very last corrected sheet; but that is excusable perhaps, only it did not render my work any easier.

Fortunately the French authorities are so paternal that this most dangerous coast is admirably cared for.

I have already referred to the almost superabundant system of lights. Even now, since I was there, yet another huge tower has been erected at Penmarche, through the bequest of the Marquise de Blocqueville, daughter of that veteran marshal of Napoleon, the Prince d'Eckmuhl.

The dangers by day are still more minutely indicated, not only by the number, excellence, and brightness of the buoys and beacons: even the most prominent rocks in the outlying reefs are also painted, so that a stranger never can be for a moment in doubt which side he should go. There is no question either as to the buoys, as there is no division of authority among many Boards or local powers.

All red buoys are left to starboard, all black buoys or beacons to port; all red and black ringed buoys or beacons may be passed on either side.

The red buoys and beacons have a thin white ring below the red, but the red is the conspicuous feature.

Owing to this excellent care of the lives of the Breton fishermen and French coasting trade primarily, and of all whose business takes them on the world of waters secondarily, and the genial, equable nature of the weather, I found coasting along the wild cliffs, and among these bewildering archipelagoes, the most enjoyable cruising imaginable.

I met with nothing but civility, and even kindly interest, from the fishermen and other inhabitants of the little ports with whom I came in contact. The officials too were everywhere polite, and carried out their duties towards me with expeditious courtesy. In fact, not the least drawback can I remember from the time I entered French waters until the day I left them.

The most dreaded of the many dangerous, because most intricate, channels along the South Breton coast is the passage of the Raz de Sein.

Personally I think the Chenal du Four is far more risky because of its length, and the multiplicity of the obstacles which must be avoided. The strength of the tide, too, is quite as powerful. Possibly during south-westerly gales the violence of the sea in the Raz de Sein may be more terrific, although from what I saw of the possibilities of the Chenal du Four, it seems likely that there can be few worse overfalls or more appalling seas than in that rock-strewn thoroughfare.*

* Strangely enough, as I correct this page, I notice in to-day's shipping intelligence a telegram from Bec du Raz, dated July 12, 1897, which states that "the steamer *Jules Chagot*, of Nantes, foundered at Tevennec yesterday at 9.30; crew saved."

After reading the descriptions of the Raz de Sein, and hearing all about it from my French friend, the owner of the white yacht lying alongside of me in the Bassin du Commerce, I weighed anchor with some slight misgivings, and worked out of the Goulet, intending to pass through the Passage de Toulinguet, and steer straight for the Bec du Raz, or the Isle Tevennec.

It ought to have been a lovely day, if the weather had carried out the promise of the glass, and the appearance of the sunrise. As it happened it did neither.

No sooner had I cleared the Goulet than the breeze, which had been right ahead all through that narrow channel, fell entirely, and a mist hid even the nearest point of the peninsula of Kelern.

Most people have an abject terror of fog. I suppose it is because I have been so used to it that I do not feel so much alarm at finding the vessel beset—unless it is at night: then I do lie-to, and keep up a solo on the fog horn.

In the present circumstances matters were a little risky, it is true, as the Toulinguet Rocks are very close to the point off which they lie, and the actual channel is scarcely a cable wide.

I steered cautiously across Camaret Bay, thinking the while of the amount of money and incapacity squandered here by the English Government during the wars of the Spanish succession. If England had only the record of her expeditions against France herself to appeal to as evidence of her successful prowess, there would be small cause for glory.

It is a far cry to the days of Crécy, Poitiers, and Agincourt, but fortunately India, Canada, and Africa are large items, which have occupied so much space in the intervening

period down to our own days that there has been hardly room to refer to such expeditions as Camaret Bay, Walcheren, and Quiberon.

What the boy was thinking of I don't know, but I fancy he was a little homesick, or something else. He had discovered that fruit was nearly as plentiful as he had anticipated. It was the cherry season, and he had indulged his tastes accordingly.

He did not mind a fog at all; in fact, the gloom of the atmosphere suited the melancholy of his sensations. He looked as if he thought he was abandoned by everyone and everything, even his own "works," as the clockmaker's daughter explained them.

From vague dreams of men in wigs, with stiff coats, odd-shaped muskets and white gaiters, I was suddenly aroused to the present by seeing a big black mass loom out of the mist, evidently quite close at hand.

I could hear as well as see the calm sea lazily splashing against its base, and reverberating in dull echoes among the cavernous recesses.

There was apparently deep water ahead, only I noticed a tall shadow, like a tower, on my left, which I took to be the beacon on a dangerous rock called La Louve.

It was all very well to accept these unknown phantoms as necessary features in the morning's cruise, but as a little error in their identity would lead to an abrupt termination of the day's enjoyment, I felt I could have willingly welcomed a little certainty. I consulted the Admiralty Pilot for the West Coast of France, but it did not help me much.

You can't recognise a rock in 'a fog from the mere statement that it is called the Toulinguet Rock. If the authority had said it was an arch nearly as big as the

Marble Arch and with a shark-like snout of gigantic proportions jutting seawards on its S.W. end, I could have settled where I was a little better, for this was exactly what I saw through the mist close to me.

It is true the book did say there was a red beacon on La Louve rock, but what colour the spectral obelisk was which loomed on my left I could not say, although I took it for granted it must be La Louve, and therefore was red.

Meanwhile the tide was scurrying us along at a pace which would soon settle any doubts. If these strangers were not what I took them to be it was tolerably certain that a little excitement would result, sufficient to divert the boy from his morbid sensations, even if those which took their place were less pleasant but more lively. The phantoms, however, disappeared, and yet no abrupt disillusionment followed.

For two hours or so I steered by compass, and faith in the unseen. I thought two or three times I heard a rasping sound as of a saw cutting timber.

Whenever this became too loud I steered away, although I could see nothing in spite of all my peering through the grey veil which obscured everything.

By this time I had grown rather callous in the matter of finding out narrow passages among rocks.

If I had not read so much about the Raz de Sein I felt sure it would have been far better for my peace of mind; but somehow the account of mountainous seas, of "a mass of broken water, where the waves are so terrific it is impossible for a boat to live," of "currents so violent that even a steamship cannot make head against them," kept buzzing in my head, and I certainly did wish the fog would clear before I came within the influence of this terrible "Raz."

Those miles, too, of reefs stretching away like a ruined breakwater made by giants in ancient days, caused me to be a little pensive as I recalled the description of them.

Yes, decidedly I wished the fog would lift.

I knew I must be in the neighbourhood of the Seins islands, or Saints, as the English sailor calls the twelve miles of rocks and reefs which jut out into the Bay of Biscay from the S.W. end of Douarnenez Bay.

The light breeze blew damp from the W. and we rippled through the quiet sea. At the rate we were going I knew I should not make the port I wanted to reach before dark.

If I could only pass the terrible Raz, however, I should be content.

Still we rippled on. Still the mist hung over the sea.

It was now nearly one o'clock, but the boy did not care for any dinner; he was far too home-sick, and pined for a land where no fruit grew.

I told him to take the helm while I studied the chart.

After a prolonged and careful examination, I came to the conclusion that the mist might after all be a consoling circumstance.

The simple ostrich is said to be happy when it hides its head in the sand, and believes that that is all which is required to produce absolute immunity from its pursuers.

Why should I disturb myself about the rocks if they did not worry themselves about me?

I looked all round. I could see no dangers, only the sea did look as if it came from a large mineral water manufactory; it was bubbling and seething in a very aerated manner.

"Hullo!" I suddenly called out, "what's that?"

But as the boy was too depressed to notice anything

beyond that part of the human system which Gibbon says so attracted the monks of Mount Athos, I was left unanswered except by the mute, although very unmistakable, reply of the object itself which had so abruptly startled me.

Even a very stupid person would have known what that dark mass was, at one time nearly covered by the rushing tide, at another emerging rugged and forbidding looking from the seething waves.

A low, vicious-looking, mischievous rock suddenly cropping up close to an unsuspecting mariner is worse than a shilling shocker.

I felt most decidedly uncomfortable. A nasty problem suggested itself: for one rock that showed just above water, how many were there that were lying just below?

Where was I? Should I anchor? If I did, should I ever get the anchor up again?

At any rate, I resolved to lie-to and sound.

We had fully ten fathoms, and evidently a rocky bottom. The lead came up cleaner even than it went down.

Already the danger had disappeared. I could see nothing but the swirling water all round me.

I determined to go on. It was too expensive anchoring in such a tide, and amidst such a collection of rocks.

I told the boy to keep a sharp lookout and to sound at intervals, although I did not expect much protection from that, as the rocks were evidently steep-to.

I trusted more to ear than to any other sense.

For another half-hour we sailed in uncertainty. I began to wonder if I had passed through the Raz without knowing it. The depths had been fairly uniform, varying from ten to fifteen fathoms; beyond that depth I didn't trouble to

sound. We were existing, as it were, on sufferance, I knew, for I could not doubt but that rocks were all round me, or at least very near.

It was now past two o'clock. Clearly there would be no reaching Benodet that day.

I was somewhat dolefully speculating on the excitement of another night out amid these wretched stone heaps, when there came a rift in the fog. The afternoon was going to be fine after all: I should soon know where I was, unless I was too far out at sea. That, I thought, could hardly be, considering the course I had steered.

Slowly the mist blew off. I looked landwards eagerly. All seemed open sea. Then I looked astern. This time I saw land: a high abrupt promontory, distant perhaps three miles. Off it I could see the rock which had been such a disagreeable surprise.

There was another black object not far off on the port bow. This I soon saw was a buoy. I consulted the chart.

After a long examination I came to the conclusion that I was not nearly so far on my voyage as had seemed likely.

That steep, high land must be the Pointe de la Chèvre, and the black buoy that which marks a very dangerous rock called La Basse Vieille at the entrance of Douarnenez Bay.

If I was right, I ought to see the land away to the south. The nearest point could not be much more than eight or nine miles. It was, however, too hazy yet to see more than about three or four.

One thing comforted me. There were no sunken rocks about the Basse Vieille, which was indicated sufficiently by the buoy.

Then I thought what a lucky thing it was the fog lifted just when it did, for on referring to the chart I saw that this danger uncovers two feet at low water. It was nearly low tide then, so that it must be very near the surface, and I was steering directly for it.

I also saw that the tide or current had set the boat too much to the eastward, or else I had instinctively hugged the land overmuch, as one is apt to do in a fog.

After another hour's sailing over a blue sea, smooth as anyone could wish, I saw ahead a faint shadow in the horizon.

Then came more shadows, and I knew I must be sighting the Iles de Sein.

The nearest object I took to be the Ile Tevennec, and I steered to pass it on the east side, for that is where the Raz de Sein begins.

I felt sure I was too late for the tide. The flood was already coming in, and I had no hope of being able to stem that stream with the light air then blowing.

Slowly the distant rocks rose above the sea. The high land called the Bec du Razare was reflecting the glow of the westering sun.

I steered more southerly.

A nice little breeze was springing up, and the old boat rippled through the sea gaily. I had hopes of tackling the Raz after all.

Until I was actually past Le Tevennec the stream did not become perceptible. There was a coasting vessel ahead of a nondescript rig, something of a *chasse-marée* and ketch combined. She was a long way ahead when I first saw her, but we were now close astern.

At first I thought she was anchored, but presently the

reason of our catching her up in this rapid way dawned upon me. She was in the midst of the struggle with the Raz.

Seeing how little progress the coaster made, I steered so as to obtain some shelter from an island with a square white lighthouse on it, which seemed to stand in the middle of the "passage perilous." I counted on there being a strong eddy in such a tide.

Evidently, by the way we caught up and passed the coaster, it was as I hoped.

I kept under the lee of the island as long as I dared. In fact, I was perhaps almost too close when I sheered out into the full strength of the tide.


The change was astonishing. A second before and we were sailing up to the island fully ten miles an hour, counting the eddy tide with us. Now we were only just holding our own, although we seemed to be going through the water at a great pace.

The wind fortunately freshened as the strength of the current increased, and it blew off the land—another lucky circumstance, as this meant smooth water.

I had already taken the precaution to shut up everything and secure the dinghy, but we hissed through the furious Race without taking a drop of water, excepting spray, on board.

Near the island called La Vieille, on which stands the lighthouse, was a very ugly-looking rock only just showing above water. On it was the ruin of a beacon apparently, or else the masonry had never been finished.

The sea was foaming round and over this rock. I used it, however, as I had done the island, and it helped me a little. By this time the coaster was back in the Bay of Douarnenez again. I suppose it was not the right thing to



do as I did. To me there is something fascinating in thus cheating these furious tides. I got through Bardsey Sound much in the same way, by tacking inside a rock on the north shore, and also Holm Sound in the Orkneys, when in both cases the tide was running its hottest against me. The ebb, too, in Hurst Narrows I have circumvented even with a head wind by turning up in very short tacks by Warden Ledge and Sconce Point on the island side. I find that fellow Corinthians do not much care for this "beach-combing work," as I heard it called. To them the open sea is the chief attraction. But it seems to me there is little diversion there beyond the monotony of the waves varied by calms or gales or spells of fine weather.

The excitements of exploring a strange coast and mastering an entirely new difficulty are never monotonous; besides, there is the coast to look at as well as the open sea.

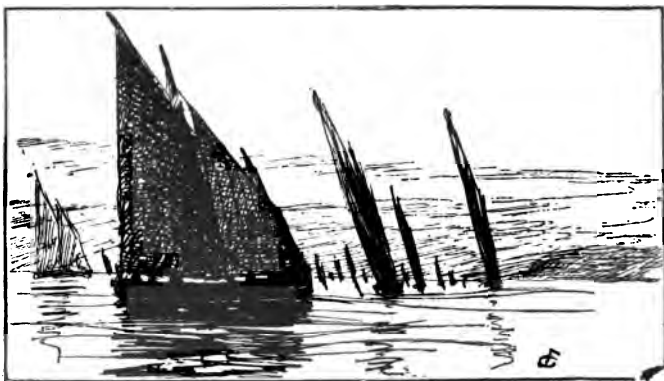
It was a hard struggle again as I steered out into the stream to clear the rock. For a few minutes we lost ground, then the breeze came fresher, and the Raz had to confess itself beaten. Every yard we gained increased our speed, until we were slipping along the cliffs towards Audierne at a comforting pace.

By sunset I had rounded the Pointe de l'Ervilly and was steering past the Gamelle shoal to drop anchor in the pretty Bay of Audierne.

There was still enough daylight left for me to see to row ashore and explore this old-world place.

I found a very long well-made stone mole protecting the north side of a long inlet, which unfortunately nearly dries out. There are a few holes where a vessel drawing not more than six feet may lie afloat, but they are not easy to find, I believe.

What astonished me was the amount of money the French Public Works Department have spent over this little, out-of-the-world port. There is no station nearer than Douarnenez, quite fourteen miles away, and the population cannot be large, yet here were at least three light-houses—quite large affairs two of them, none of your Poole sentry boxes and farthing rushlights—a long massive stone jetty or mole, considerably over 1,000 yards, and other substantial works.



DOUARNENEZ FISHING-BOATS.

The fishing-boats that used the place were none of them as large as a small Brighton lugger, and the gear—well, it spoke volumes for the mildness of the gales, or else the owners preferred to know that at the first puff everything would go, so there was no fear of a capsize.

I returned on board pondering.

That night we rolled a good deal, for the wind was strong

off shore, and the Gamelle shore, which ought to be a good foundation for a breakwater, did not prevent the swell from the Bay of Biscay from rolling in heavily.

Next morning we made an early start. There were the rocks of Penmark, or Penmarche, to be rounded and the bewildering Glennan Archipelago to be navigated.

A look at the chart of this part of the coast is quite enough to re-assure any *blasé* Corinthian weary of the excitement of the Thames and in search of fresh adventures.

The Penmarche rocks are merely to be avoided; provided one keeps seaward about four miles off the lighthouse this is easy. There are channels in between the rocks, but it is far easier to find the rocks than the channels.

I remember seeing one French fishing-boat that had succeeded in accomplishing this. The result was a neat illustration of Noah's ark on Mount Ararat.

The *chasse-marinée* was perched or balanced on the very top of an isolated cone of rock. She was held exactly amidships, although her bow and stern projected into space some six or seven feet. The sea had retired to perhaps thirty yards from where the boat was perched and was fully twelve feet below her keel.

But if one can keep clear of the Penmarche rocks, the Glennan Archipelago must be penetrated to enter the Odet or Quimper river. This means for a stranger some fun. If only one can see the buoys, and start fair from the first one, the interest is of a tranquil order.

But should the visitor mistake any of the buoys or miss them, then there is a little more excitement—indeed, the interest becomes very lively.

The buoys are mostly to be seen from each other, or nearly as soon as one buoy is passed the next one comes in

sight, so that by careful watching I was able to pick my way.

It was Sunday morning, and I found Benodet quite gay. Flags and drums seemed the correct thing, so I hoisted the ensign, and the boy, who had now recovered, wanted to blow the fog-horn and beat the frying-pan, but I explained that we belonged to another nation, and were not expected to show as much enthusiasm as the natives.

I don't think Benodet, or the Odet river, is at all an easy place to enter. The last quarter of the ebb was scouring out as I rounded the rocks at the entrance, and the light breeze was right ahead.

In spite of this we managed to crawl in about dead low water, and dropped anchor in a nice little cove on the north side. Then I looked back.

The distant white towers of the Glennan and the Ile aux Moutons were just visible. I could see the long reefs through which we had come, and I felt rather pleased, for it did look a bit difficult.

Presently the douanier, or some such authority, came off and asked the usual particulars. I invited the officer down below, for to my surprise he showed no inclination to come aboard, and treated me with far more courtesy than ever our authorities did.

He came, and we had a pleasant little chat.

Benodet makes an excellent headquarters for exploring Quimper and the country round, but the river is not an easy one to navigate, as the turns are sharp and the tides very strong. The ebb is the worst time, naturally. A large coaster strained herself badly, although she was in charge of a pilot, while I was there.

It was at Quimper that I first fully understood how very much the French *bourgeoisie* dislike the English.

There were a group of small merchants and *commis voyageurs* dining at the head of the table at which I was sitting. They began to discuss the English and Germans.

"The Germans are pigs," growled a grizzled commercial traveller.

"The English are perfidious," exclaimed another.

"Of the two nations," added a third, with a philosophical air, "as of two evils, choose the least. I prefer the English."

"What!" almost shouted the first speaker. "What! Prefer a race of *scélérats*, of traitors, who have filched everything from us—Egypt, Siam, the Indies, Canada even! No, no; the English are worse than the Germans."

This sentiment was cordially accepted by the rest, with the single exception of the philosophical bagman.

He simply shrugged his shoulders, and remarked that at any rate the English did not close their markets to the rest of the world, as some nations did, and if they suffered from land hunger, at least they were willing to share the bread and cheese.

These views, however, were quite unacceptable to the others, and the first speaker growled to his neighbour:—

"Truly, one can make allowances for Bidaud; he has just done a good stroke of business in *patates* with a *négociant* of Portsmouth. *Voilà!*"

But on the whole it struck me that the French are mostly indifferent to strangers, provided the latter do not make themselves ridiculous or too conspicuous.

There seems, however, to be a certain unmistakable characteristic in our nation which never escapes detection.

Austrians, Germans, Russians, Italians, Spaniards can be mistaken, but one never mistakes an Englishman.

It may be a matter of clothes. I think it is more a matter of manner and style.

The cathedral of Quimper is fine, and there is a pretty wooded knoll on the south side of the town with zig-zag walks about it under the trees, making a charming recreation ground for the town.

I don't know how it is—it may even be fancy—but it seemed to me that the Breton maidens and their young men carry on their courtships in a more idyllic manner than does the corresponding class in our country.


There was less of boisterous romping, and the laughter was more subdued, more of the nature of the Horatian flirtations so daintily described in the Odes.

I strongly recommend to others this Breton cruise. I found it decidedly the most interesting cruise of any I have made; one need never be dull, and as to loneliness, the difficulty was when to be alone.

Concarneau, L'Orient, La Trinité or the Rivière de Crach, the Morbihan, Penerf, and the Loire—these are the chief shelters and ports from which to explore the country round, a country which should be interesting to Englishmen, and especially Welshmen, for it was undoubtedly largely peopled from our own land.

The more I coast round the south-west shores of England and the Welsh coast, the more I am inclined to think that we know very little of what actually occurred during the third, fourth, and fifth centuries of our era.

The annals of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries are especially defective in regard to our islands and the West generally. This vagueness it is, perhaps, which



gives the Arthurian legends such a margin of fact, and clothes even the Nibelungen cycle with the mantle of the possible.

If few real facts are well established, there is a vast space to fill in with legends, whereof one may assert with equal force that the story is true as that it is not, provided the details are not too extravagant.

There is such an attraction for me in this rugged land of legend and romance, that I can explain it on no other principle than that of heredity.

The country is not particularly pretty in itself. Indeed, it is not at all more beautiful than Cornwall; only in ancient castles and hoary remains of a dim past is it especially rich, and such wealth is truly a fortune to an imagination that loves to dwell dreamily on the doings of men seen through the misty light of long ago. The littlenesses of life appear less, heroic actions seem more chivalrous, the loves and passions which are coeval with our race glow with a purer fire, or more lurid flame.

In the legends of Brittany, Anjou, and Touraine there seems a more finished style, an ampler fund of anecdote, a livelier imagination, and a more accurate detail than is to be found in our own provincial legends. The lowlands of Scotland and the borderlands of Wales and Northumberland alone compare with the martial and romantic annals of Brittany and Touraine.

The incidents of the North, however, are generally grosser in their execution, if the details are not more bloodstained in reality than those of the South.

For the Corinthian sailor who has a taste for archæology as well as romance, combined with constantly varying practical excitement, a cruise along the southern coasts of

Finisterre, the Morbihan, and the river Loire is an excursion not to be despised. The exploration of the Morbihan and the Quiberon Archipelago provides weeks of exciting sailing, while Auray, Carnac, Quiberon and Belle Ile, with the splendid castles of Josselin and Succinio, should satisfy the most ardently romantic admirer of mediæval or prehistoric remains.

I can see small attraction in the barren and dreary North, destitute of all human memories, unless they be of lonely suffering and icy death. The cruising grounds of our own shores and those of France, Belgium, Holland, and Denmark provide ample scope for the amateur's skill and love of adventure, as well as interest of every kind without having to seek for a world of ice.

There is not space to describe in detail all the incidents of this delightful cruise.

There were few exciting experiences except in finding out the narrow channels among the mazy clusters of islands and rocks which skirt the coasts. I had no narrow escapes, no accidents or difficulties of any kind.

I never thought for a moment that there was anything unusual in handling a boat like the *Lady Harvey* with only an ignorant boy to help me, because all seemed so easy and comfortable.

The difficulties of such places as Concarneau, the Morbihan and Penerf are wonderfully simplified by the excellent system of buoys and beacons, while the tides are not exceptionally violent, except in the entrance to the Morbihan and the Vilaine River.

The estuary of the Loire naturally pours out a prodigious tide at springs, and I shall never forget the wrench the old

vessel received as she swung to her cable in the fierce rush of the flood tide off St. Nazaire.

The return voyage to Falmouth and the subsequent cruise up the Bristol Channel and along the Welsh coast, and so across the Irish Sea to the Clyde, ended that season's sailing.

I have never enjoyed a better cruise, and that part of it which took me into French waters I look back upon as the pleasantest of all.

While writing these pages I have seen many fellow Corinthians at work.

The more I see the more I realise the egotism which has led me to tell of my own experiences.

The only novelty which can at all excuse these reminiscences, is perhaps to be found in the size of the craft I handled, and the intricacy of the places I visited.

Most other Corinthians who have told the world of their doings have preferred the open sea and have handled much smaller craft. I, on the contrary, love the narrow inlets and little known waters of a strange coast, while I must own to liking plenty of headroom and accommodation down below.

The open sea has its charms, but they grow a little monotonous.

Cruising among ever-varying scenery, where the very intricacies of an unknown navigation offer endless excitement, is the kind of sailing I enjoy, while sufficient of the

open sea is passed when making a passage to a new cruising ground.

Let each man, however, follow his own tastes, so the noble pastime of Corinthian sailing shall have many votaries, and the love of adventure shall increase among our young men.

THE END.

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